

KEITH

THE MAN FROM

U.N.C.L.E.

THE AFFAIR OF THE
GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

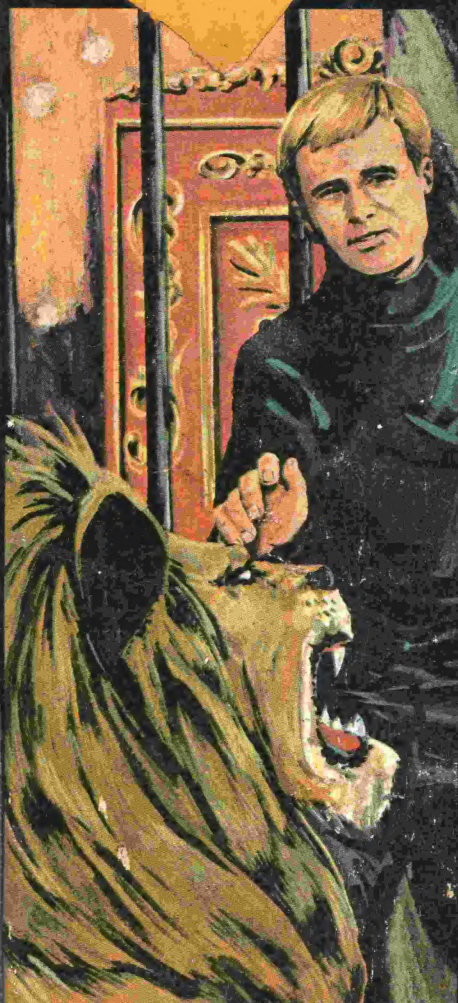


Whitman

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.



THE AFFAIR OF THE
GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

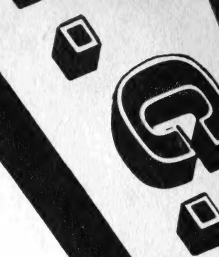


Authorized Edition



G. L. E.





**The Man From
U. N. C. L. E.**

The Man From
U. N. C. L. E.

and the
AFFAIR
of the
GUNRUNNERS'
GOLD

by Brandon Keith

based on the well-known television series

illustrated by
Larry Pelini

WHITMAN PUBLISHING COMPANY • Racine, Wisconsin

Copyright © 1967 by
METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER INC.

All rights reserved.

Produced in U.S.A. by
Western Publishing Company, Inc.

Contents

1	Welcoming Committee	7
2	Lone Wolf	13
3	An Extraordinary Discovery	18
4	Interrogation	27
5	Thunderbolts	36
6	More Thunderbolts	43
7	Agent or Double Agent?	49
8	Tools of the Trade	54
9	Solo Delivers the Goods	58
10	First Report	67
11	An Evening Chore	71
12	Invitation Declined	77
13	Second Report	81
14	Illya in the Lions' Den	85
15	Invitation Accepted	93
16	Sight-Seeing	105
17	Guessing Games	113
18	Name-Dropping	120
19	Unmasked!	127
20	More Guessing Games	136
21	"Kitten on the Keys"	142
22	Say "U.N.C.L.E."	150
23	Change in Course	162
24	Ten Long Minutes	167
25	The Old Man Takes Charge	175
26	Candy Lulls the Lions	183
27	Zeroing In	196
28	Parley Makes His Point	200
29	Circus Catch	206



1. Welcoming Committee

THE SUN WAS like a great golden balloon in a brilliant sky blue as cobalt. It was mid-July and the day was bright and breezy at Kennedy Airport in New York City. Outside the Customs Building, casually chatting, stood Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin.

Solo's wrists were crossed in front of his body. His hat, held in his left hand, covered his right hand. Illya's hands, to the contrary, were fully exposed, but what nestled in the palm of his left hand was not exposed—except to him and to Solo, and they glanced at it frequently. It was a small

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

photo of the man for whom they were waiting, Howard Ogden, who was arriving on a flight from Bogotá, capital of Colombia, South America. It was an old photo, taken five years ago.

"But," Solo remarked, "a picture is a picture. We'll recognize him."

Illya grinned. "Suppose he's wearing a disguise?"

"He won't be. Why should he? He has no idea he's got company out here expectantly awaiting him."

"One thing's for sure. That baby's not traveling under his own name."

It was Solo's turn to grin. "Yessir, that's for sure."

Suddenly Illya stiffened. "Look!"

Solo looked. There was their man, carrying two heavy suitcases. Tall, dark, in his mid-thirties, he was striding erect with athletic step toward the taxi stand. Quickly, efficiently, Solo and Kur-yakin parted and then came together again on either side of the tall man.

"Just keep right on walking, Mr. Ogden," Solo said.

The dark face swiveled to Solo, then to Kur-

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

yakin, then back to Solo, but what convinced the man was what Solo showed him. A quick flip of the hat in the left hand revealed the gun in Solo's right hand.

Howard Ogden, an experienced operator in his own right, was not one to argue with a gun. But even were he so disposed, he could not. If he attempted a struggle, he would have to drop his bags, and that would incur the risk of losing them. Nor could he break and run—the bags were too heavy. He would have to go along with the two strangers and then talk them out of whatever they were up to. For a moment he considered it a case of mistaken identity—but no. The man with the gun had called him by his real name.

They walked past the taxi stand to where Kur-yakin's car was parked. Ogden noticed it was a quite ordinary sedan, nothing fancy. The blond man opened a rear door, motioned to Ogden to put the suitcases inside, and Ogden complied. Then the blond man slammed the door and got into the driver's seat. The man with the gun smiled politely.

"Okay, Ogden. Get in. Up front."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"My name isn't Ogden."

"What is it?"

"Owens."

"Have it your own way. Get in."

Ogden sat alongside Kuryakin and Solo sat on the other side of Ogden, the muzzle of the pistol pressed against the man in the middle. Kuryakin started the car and they were off.

"Look, you guys, you're wasting your time," Ogden began in a bantering tone. A veteran of many criminal adventures, he was trying to ease himself out of a tight situation. "If this is some kind of stickup, you people sure picked the wrong party. All you can get out of me is a whole lot of nothing."

"What about the bags back there?" inquired Illya Kuryakin.

"Worthless. That is, to you."

"What are they worth to you?"

"They're my business."

"What's your business?" asked Solo.

"I'm a salesman."

"Salesman? For what?"

"I'm a machinery salesman. I work for a firm in

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Bogotá. I'm up here to see some prospective customers in the United States. Those bags back there are actually sample cases containing miniature samples of ironware—motors, cogs, gears, wheelworks, mechanical contrivances—for display to the customers. I can prove to you that I'm telling the absolute truth. All you have to do is look over my papers, my passport, my identification."

Could be he was telling the truth. Neither Illya nor Solo could contradict him. They had had no thorough briefing—only the meager details sufficient for their purpose. They had been given the photo and told to go to Kennedy Airport. Purpose: to pick up Howard Ogden, the man in the picture, no matter his present alias, and bring him in. Those had been the Old Man's instructions, the Old Man being their boss, Alexander Waverly, head of U.N.C.L.E. All the instructions had been general except one, and that one specific instruction Solo now proceeded to obey. The muzzle of the gun pressed against the man in the middle. Solo pulled the trigger.

Howard Ogden did not die. Nor did he bleed. Nor was he wounded. His chin descended to his

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

chest and he was immediately asleep. Solo's gun was not a lethal weapon. It discharged a tiny, spongy bullet that had no power of penetration. When the bullet smacked against the target, it flattened and released chemicals into the skin, rendering the body unconscious.

As Alexander Waverly said: "A gun—unless in the hands of a murderer—is merely an instrument to immobilize an adversary, to stop him, to cause him to be harmless and powerless. What more perfectly serves all those ends than sweet and peaceful slumber?"

Sweet and peaceful slumber on the part of Howard Ogden perfectly served the ends of Solo and Kuryakin. Ogden was being escorted to U.N.C.L.E. Headquarters, and his escorts, U.N.C.L.E. agents, could not permit him to see or know where he was being taken.

2. Lone Wolf

SITTING ALONE in his office at Headquarters, teeth firmly clenched on the stem of his pipe, Alexander Waverly stirred impatiently. Where were they? He looked up at the clock on the wall, took the pipe from his mouth, shook his head, then smiled despite himself. There was time, plenty of time. Under no circumstances—all having gone well—could they as yet have completed the mission. But soon.

Shrugging, he sat back, lit the pipe, and, to curb his impatience, reviewed the matter of Howard Ogden, who just possibly could be the key to the solution of a problem that had been giving him a

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

good deal of trouble for a number of years.

During the past decade, certain Latin American countries—Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Bolivia—had been plagued by Communist revolutionaries. A longtime plague, chronic, persistent, it had, during the past couple of years, flared to alarming proportions, and the reason was—guns! For the past two years, there had been an immense, illegal influx of contraband guns and armaments to the revolutionaries.

Waverly had long suspected that T.H.R.U.S.H. was behind this gigantic smuggling operation. Certainly the turmoil within these Latin American countries provided a rich and fertile field for nefarious T.H.R.U.S.H. activity. But whatever the cover, it was excellent: There was not a single shred of proof that T.H.R.U.S.H. was involved. And now, at last, a possibility, a hope—in the person of Howard Ogden.

The chief of U.N.C.L.E. knew a great deal about Howard Ogden, and of one thing he was certain—Ogden was not a member of T.H.R.U.S.H. Indeed, he was not a member of anything! Ogden was a free-lancer, an individual adventurer, a soldier

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

of fortune. In all truth, until now U.N.C.L.E. had displayed little interest in Howard Ogden—he was small fry, a loner, a solitary operator. Time and again, however, he had come within Waverly's scrutiny, but only as a tiny tangent to other, major investigations.

Waverly knew, for instance, that five years ago Ogden had been arrested on the Pacific Coast, charged with gunrunning—illegally smuggling weapons, but on a small scale, to Communist China. The U.S. authorities had caught up with him, indicted him, then released him on bail awaiting trial, but Ogden had jumped the bail and fled the country. When last heard of, he was somewhere in South America.

Quite recently Waverly had learned that Ogden was in Colombia, a hotbed of Communist banditry and insurrection. But then, when Waverly had got a tip that Ogden was coming back to the States, his interest in Howard Ogden increased rapidly.

To begin with, Ogden had been charged with gunrunning. That in itself was small concern to Waverly, but of large concern to Waverly was *gun-running in Latin America*. Could Ogden, somehow,

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

have become involved in *that*? And why was he coming back to the United States? Why would this man, a fugitive from justice, risk, under whatever pretense, under whatever forged papers, a return to the United States?

Waverly's instincts had prickled. An experienced investigator, head of United Network Command for Law Enforcement, Alexander Waverly, a born ferret, played out his hunch. He assigned agents for discreet but intensive research on the subject of Howard Ogden and soon knew all there was to know about him.

Ogden, a bachelor, a lone wolf, a criminal adventurer, was nonetheless a highly intelligent, resourceful man. A wily schemer, an opportunist, he was a shrewd, closemouthed individual reputed to know a great deal more than he ever let on. Thus, although Waverly had acquired many items of small information, he was aware that the information was far from sufficient.

Waverly sighed. He wondered how much more—if anything—he would learn when Solo and Kur-yakin delivered the man.

It depends, he thought. It depends upon what

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

levers Ogden himself might furnish to pry open that close mouth of his.

As it turned out, Howard Ogden furnished all the levers that were necessary.

3. *An Extraordinary Discovery*

A SMALL LIGHT suddenly came alive on the desk console.

Waverly pushed a button.

"Yes?"

The overhead loudspeaker boomed hollowly. Waverly recognized Kuryakin's voice.

"Chief?"

"Speak up, Mr. Kuryakin."

"We're in Detention. We've got your chap here."

"Good. Good work."

"Thank you."

"I'll be right down."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Waverly clicked off the light on the console board and silence returned to the room. He knocked the ashes from his pipe, stood up, and went out along steel-walled corridors to the elevator in the rear.

Downstairs in the Detention Section, Kuryakin opened the door to Waverly's knock. The Old Man smiled, his face wrinkling like ancient leather.

"How did it go, gentlemen?"

"No sweat. No—er—perspiration, sir," Illya replied, then pointed to the suitcases on the floor. "He was carrying those."

"What else was he carrying?"

"Else?" Illya inquired somewhat blankly.

Solo grinned. "His personal belongings. His effects. Is that what you mean, sir?"

"Of course."

"Oh. Else. Yes." And now Illya grinned embarrassedly.

"We haven't gathered them yet," Solo confided.

"Where is he?"

"Still asleep, sir. Naturally."

"Naturally," the Old Man growled. "Well, kindly gather the effects, Mr. Solo."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Yessir. At once, Mr. Waverly."

Solo took up a large manila envelope, went to a far wall, pushed a button, and a steel door slid open. Solo entered into a bright, well-ventilated room fitted out as a bedroom. Comfortably asleep on the bed was Howard Ogden. Quickly, gently, Solo searched him, placing his belongings in the manila envelope. Then he left the bedroom, touching the button again to close the steel door.

"Everything?" the Old Man asked.

"Everything," Solo replied.

"Please take the bags, Mr. Kuryakin."

They marched to the Investigation Room, the Old Man leading, Solo with the manila envelope following, and Illya with the heavy bags as the rear guard. There the Old Man sat in a wooden armchair at a long table, motioning for Solo and Kuryakin to sit on either side of him. Above them hovered a group of technical experts.

The Old Man examined the contents of the manila envelope. Ogden was traveling under the name of Harry Owens. His papers and credentials showed him to be a machinery salesman for the Castillo Manufacturing Company, an old, respect-

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

able company in Colombia, South America, with its main office in the city of Bogotá.

Brusquely the Old Man ordered, "Check that out, please, Mr. Kuryakin."

"Yessir."

Illya went to the privacy of another room where, alone, he made the transcontinental telephone call. When he returned to the Investigation Room he found it a swirl of activity. Experts were examining Ogden's passport and papers. Other experts were examining the suitcases, now empty. The contents of the suitcases—the small samples of machinery parts—were on a counter, being inspected by Billy Sol Kaplan, expert on metals.

The Old Man looked up.

"Well, Mr. Kuryakin?"

"Two things, sir. Castillo Manufacturing does not sell machinery in the United States. And Castillo Manufacturing does not, and never did, employ a salesman named Harry Owens."

The Old Man approved. "Excellent."

And he sat, fingers drumming the arm of his chair, waiting word from his experts.

The first report concerned the suitcases.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"No false bottoms," an expert said. "No secret compartments. Nothing unusual. Just good, solid, ordinary valises."

The Old Man nodded slowly. Quite obviously, he was disappointed.

The next report had to do with Ogden's passport and papers.

"Forgeries," an expert said. "Beautifully done. Fine quality. But forgeries, all."

Again the Old Man nodded. This he knew. This he expected.

Solo glanced toward Illya. The Old Man was fast getting nowhere. Disappointment was etched in every seam of his lined face. Now Waverly, shoulders drooping, turned toward Billy Sol Kaplan. What could he expect from the metals expert? A lecture about machinery parts. The Old Man's sigh was a quiver of disappointment.

Billy Sol was holding a gear wheel in his right hand.

"These samples," he said, "are poor, quite crude." He tossed the gear wheel idly, catching it. "Rotten samples; put together, they simply wouldn't work." Suddenly he frowned and paused,



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

lost in thought. "Just a minute."

"What?" the Old Man asked dispiritedly.

Again Solo glanced toward Kuryakin. All fight seemed to have been drained from the Old Man. He was merely going through the paces. The job, which at first had so happily animated him, now seemed to cast him deeper into a flat, sad hopelessness.

"What?" the Old Man repeated to Billy Sol, tossing and catching the iron gear wheel.

"The heft of this, the feel," Billy Sol said excitedly. "I don't like it. The heft is wrong. Peculiar. Queer."

Whirling about, Billy Sol dropped the gear wheel to the counter. From a cabinet above the counter, he took fine-pronged instruments and a microscope. He carefully examined the gear wheel, then, dancing about in his excitement, thrust it aside, took up another of the iron samples, examined that, and then another and another.

Solo watched, Kuryakin watched, and the Old Man watched, each experiencing similar emotions. Billy Sol Kaplan was a little man, dry and wizened, older than his chief. He had once been a professor

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

of physics at Yale University. What, now, had happened to Billy Sol Kaplan? Usually he was calm, dour, solid as the metals of which he was an acclaimed expert. But now his breathing was noisy, his little feet were jumping, he was dancing about like a youngster at a discotheque. Finally he made an extraordinary pronouncement.

"Gentlemen," said Billy Sol Kaplan. "*Every item contained in these suitcases is made of gold. Gold!*"

"Gold!" exclaimed Alexander Waverly.

"Molten gold," returned Billy Sol, "has been poured into crude molds, made to look like parts of machinery, then left to harden, and then covered with a thin veneer of sheet iron."

And now it was the Old Man who was prancing as though to his own personal strains of go-go music. Lightly he trod to a phone, lifted the receiver, and said, "Send down Frank McCall. At once." Frank McCall was the money man, the financial wizard, the monetary expert.

They waited, as though a fixed tableau, silent, expectant, motionless, all except Billy Sol Kaplan, who again, quite feverishly, was applying instruments to seemingly crude iron machinery parts.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

When McCall, out of breath, arrived, he was quickly briefed on the situation, and then he went into conclave with Billy Sol Kaplan. They talked quietly together, whispered, laughed, again examined with instruments the machinery parts, weighed the parts on a delicate scale, and when Frank McCall came out of conclave he announced, "*Your salesman from Bogotá was carrying one hundred thousand dollars' worth of pure gold.*"

Reaction was a great cumulative gasp, like the hiss of an erupting volcano, from the assemblage—all except Mr. Alexander Waverly, who calmly addressed Solo and Kuryakin.

"Gentlemen."

"Yessir," they replied in unison.

"Please revive our slumbering guest."

"Yessir."

"And bring him up to my office for some gentle interrogation."

"Yessir. Gentle. Interrogation. At once, Mr. Waverly."

The Old Man grimaced good-naturedly.

Solo and Illya left the room.

4. *Interrogation*

ALEXANDER WAVERLY sat in his swivel chair, his hands loosely clasped on his abdomen. Opposite him, the desk between them, sat Howard Ogden. A distance behind Ogden stood Solo and Kuryakin, like sentinels.

The Old Man coughed, then smiled.

"Mr. Ogden, do you know who I am?"

"Owens," said Ogden, disregarding the question.

The Old Man's smile tightened. His gaze concentrated. He saw before him a man lounging easily, long legs crossed, face serenely confident. The face was dark, well structured, with a strong jaw and

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

dark, narrow, glittering eyes.

"Mr. Owens, do you know who I am?"

"Sir, you are known, respected, and sometimes feared by the entire world. Nobody knows who your agents are, who your people are, but you—you are internationally renowned. You are Alexander Waverly, head of United Network Command for Law Enforcement. What beats me is, what is your interest in *me*?"

"Why not you, Mr. Ogden?"

"Owens," said Ogden. "I mean—me—for you—for your organization—I'm a pipsqueak."

"I quite agree with your description of yourself, Mr. Ogden. Pipsqueak."

"Owens," corrected Ogden.

"Let's clear up this Ogden-Owens business," the Old Man said sternly. "Your name is Howard Ogden. You are under indictment by the United States government, an indictment of five years' standing. Five years ago in California you jumped bail and disappeared. I have information that you spent those five years in South America. Do you wish to deny any of this, Mr. Ogden?"

Silence.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Do you admit you are Howard Ogden?"

Silence.

"Would you prefer that I call in the federal authorities to make the identification?"

"No, sir." There was a grim smile now on the dark face.

"You are Howard Ogden?"

"Yes, sir."

"You spent the past five years in South America?"

"Yes, sir—knocking around in South America."

"Now, if you please, Mr. Ogden, why this sudden return to the United States under the alias Harry Owens?"

"Harry Owens. That's the name I was using in South America."

"But why this sudden return to the States?"

"Well, sir, I've been trying to go straight. I got a job, a good job, as a salesman with the Castillo Manufacturing Company in Bogotá. They asked me to come up here to the States, to try to open up the U.S. market for them. Naturally I couldn't refuse."

"Naturally you couldn't refuse," said the Old

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Man, and then he proceeded to knock the suave Ogden's story into a cocked hat. He sat forward in the swivel chair, fingering the passport and papers on his desk. "Mr. Ogden, your passport and credentials are forgeries—excellent forgeries, but forgeries. Furthermore, no Harry Owens ever worked for the Castillo Manufacturing Company nor has that company any interest in opening up United States markets." Quietly now the Old Man added, "Do you wish to change your story, Mr. Ogden-Owens?"

The suave soldier of fortune remained unruffled.

"I'm afraid you've trapped me, Mr. Waverly."

"Exactly my purpose, sir. Now I want the truth!"

"Yes, the truth," said Ogden-Owens smoothly.

"Well, sir, I *had* assumed the name Harry Owens—but Harry Owens had grown sick and tired of the fugitive life in South America. I figured by this time—after five years—the heat was off back here in my own country. So I conceived this plan, this method, of returning to my homeland to start fresh—a new life as Harry Owens."

"So now we have the truth, have we?"

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Yes, sir. And I trust you won't go too hard with me because I lied to you before. If you turn me over to the authorities—please, I should like permission first to call a lawyer. So that at least my belongings can be taken care of."

"Belongings?"

"My personal effects. My suitcases."

"Suitcases," the Old Man grunted mildly. "But all they contain are small samples of machinery parts."

"True enough, sir. But they don't belong to me. I borrowed them, promised to return them, and I would certainly like to do that." The dark man smiled. "It is all a part of my new resolve—turning over a new leaf, being honest, going straight."

It was time. The Old Man had softened up his wily opponent. Now it was time for the haymaker.

"My dear Mr. Ogden-Owens," said the Old Man softly, "may I inform you that the contents of your suitcases have been carefully examined? I should like further to inform you that your honest and straightforward story is nothing more than a dishonest and crooked mass of lies. Every item in each suitcase is an iron-plated object of gold! Under

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

your alias of Harry Owens, you have illegally transported one hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold into the United States! Now, what have you to say to that, mister supposedly reformed ex-criminal?"

No longer suave, no longer smooth, but pale and shaken, Howard Ogden lurched up out of his chair, stood towering, fists clenched, over the seated Alexander Waverly. Solo was beside him instantly. He took him by his neck and elbow and thrust him back into his chair. Howard Ogden sat glum, silent, crestfallen.

Alexander Waverly hammered home his advantage.

Sternly he said, "There are now *two* massive criminal counts against you—the original indictment for gunrunning, and now the additional crime of unlawfully transporting gold into the United States. Now, my dear sir, it is up to you."

"What?" Ogden gasped. "How is it up to me?"

The Old Man's face crinkled into a persuasive grin.

"Mr. Ogden-Owens, I—my organization—requires your cooperation. We need your complete



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

confession regarding each and every detail of this last criminal venture—but *every single detail*. You are known as a closemouthed man, but what we need”—the Old Man chuckled—“is an open mouth.” He sighed. “If you grant us *your* cooperation, then I promise you *my* cooperation. I shall go to bat for you, in your defense. I shall inform the federal authorities that you gave important assistance to this organization, and I shall do all in my power to see to it that the penalties for your crimes are mitigated. One good turn deserves another—but it’s in your hands now, Mr. Ogden-Owens. I shall do what I can to help you out of your difficulties, but on one condition—that *I have your full, truthful cooperation—total confession.*”

Wan, defeated, Howard Ogden sat slumped in his chair. He was a criminal but an intelligent criminal—he was not a fool. He realized that his game was up, that his one chance of survival was to throw himself on the mercy of the powerful man, seated across from him, who promised him mercy. But to achieve that mercy he could no longer wriggle, squirm, lie, make mockery of truth. He must cooperate with every fiber of his being, he

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

must give what was asked of him—total confession. And so Howard Ogden came to a decision.

“Yes,” he said. “The truth. The entire truth, so help me.”

5. *Thunderbolts*

THE OLD MAN lit his pipe.

Solo and Kuryakin remained quietly in the background.

"Where would you like me to begin?" asked Howard Ogden.

"I'd like a general idea of what you were doing in South America."

"Well, first I assumed the name Harry Owens. Then I traveled about making contact with the revolutionary forces. Once contact was established, I assisted the Communist partisans, the saboteurs, the raiders, the bandits in the hills."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

The Old Man leaned forward. "What are your politics?"

"Mr. Waverly, I have no politics. I'm on the side that pays me."

"Were you well paid, Mr. Ogden?" The Old Man tapped his pipe.

"Not at all. I earned my keep, enough to keep me in food and clothes. The first big job that came my way was this one that brought me back to the States."

"Let's hold that a moment, Mr. Ogden."

"Yes, Mr. Waverly."

The Old Man put down his pipe. Elbows on the desk, he peered across at Ogden, his intent gaze riveting the man's attention. The next question would put Ogden to the proof. Either he would go along in full cooperation, or he would back down.

"Mr. Ogden, for the past two years enormous shipments of arms and armaments have been filtering down to the Communist rebels in the Latin American countries. You were right there in that hotbed, and you're not some little innocent pawn. You know what goes on around you. Now, this

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

question, Mr. Ogden: Who has been making these shipments?"

There was silence for a moment, both men rigid, their eyes locked.

Then Ogden replied. "The firm of Raymond and Langston."

For once the sophisticated Alexander Waverly was completely thunderstruck. In amazement his mouth opened, his jaws hung slack. Then his mouth snapped shut and he took up his pipe but did not smoke it. He held it, moving it in his hands, doing *something* to cover his utter astonishment.

Raymond and Langston! This was a reputable, reliable armaments company, its offices and showrooms in New York, its factory in New Jersey. Raymond and Langston, a part of an Australian corporation, had been here in the United States for three years, and Waverly himself was acquainted with Mr. Felix Raymond and Mr. Otis Langston.

"Raymond and Langston," said the Old Man, carefully controlling his voice. "And by what method did they accomplish these shipments?"

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Quite simple, Mr. Waverly." Ogden was enjoying his new role. Once he had made his decision, once committed, he was resolved to relate the entire truth to the one man who could persuade the authorities to treat him with mercy. "Raymond and Langston have been diverting arms from normal business and shipping these arms, crated as innocent scrap metal, to supposedly innocent receivers in various ports in South America."

"Shipping—how?"

"By freighter."

"Whose freighters? Who owns these ships?"

"Chartered freighters, Mr. Waverly, but they are no part of the operation. They are legitimate freighters. Their captains really believe they are carrying scrap metal. And that is the reason that payment to Raymond and Langston is made in gold and by courier."

The Old Man frowned. "Please explain that, Mr. Ogden."

"Well, if payment were made in cash, the captains of the freighters would become suspicious, since the payment far exceeds the value of the cargo if it were scrap metal."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Just how *is* the payment made?" Waverly demanded.

"For each separate shipment there is a separate payment. In gold. Gold in molds of sample machinery parts, then camouflaged with steel or iron plating. And each time a payment is made, it is made by a different courier."

"And how are these couriers chosen?"

"A trusted man is selected by a Communist leader, and this man, always a different man, brings up the two suitcases loaded with the camouflaged gold."

"And for this trip you were selected?"

"That is correct, Mr. Waverly. My first real big job."

"What is your fee? How are you paid for this illegal action?"

"Ten percent of the booty. Ten percent of the stuff I'm carrying. Ten thousand dollars, paid by either Raymond or Langston when I deliver, plus a two-week vacation here in the States, living as a guest in the home of Raymond and Langston."

"Do you know where this home is?"

"No. I know where their offices are."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Same place," Waverly informed him.

The firm of Raymond and Langston was a three-story house on lower Park Avenue. The main floor was the showroom, the second floor contained the offices, and the top floor was comprised of the apartment of Mr. Raymond and Mr. Langston—and on that floor were also the guest rooms.

"Mr. Ogden, how well do you know either one of the gentlemen—Mr. Raymond or Mr. Langston?"

And now Howard Ogden, alias Harry Owens, fired off his second thunderbolt.

"I don't know them at all. I have never seen either one of them, and neither of them has ever seen me."

The Old Man squinted. "I—I don't understand."

"A part of the cover for the operation. Never the same courier. Always the courier is a total stranger."

"Then how do they know they can trust you?"

"They trust their people in South America who *select* the couriers."

"But what would stop one like you—a bold adventurer like yourself—from running off with a

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

hundred thousand dollars in gold?"

"Where would we run? Where could we hide? Where in the world could we ever be safe from—T.H.R.U.S.H.?"

6. *More Thunderbolts*

T.H.R.U.S.H.!

A thrill of anticipation shivered through Alexander Waverly, but he continued his slow, methodical examination.

Yes, Howard Ogden went on, Mr. Raymond and Mr. Langston are a part of T.H.R.U.S.H., sent to the United States by their Australian section. Yes, each time it is a different courier, different papers, different passport. No, Raymond and Langston have no knowledge as to who the courier will be. They depend upon their South American people; they do not risk unnecessary communication.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"But then how would they know, for instance, that you *are* the courier?"

"I bring the best identification in the world—a hundred thousand dollars in gold."

The Old Man lit his pipe and became partially hidden behind wreaths of smoke. But Howard Ogden was not finished. He was fighting prison bars, fighting for years of freedom, fighting for a reduction of the penalties of his crimes.

In South America Ogden had been closely connected to important Communist leaders. He had had their confidence. And now, unmasked and greatly to his credit in the lessening of his penalty, he proceeded to offer information that had Alexander Waverly sitting tense and upright in his chair.

"In the basement of their building in New York," Ogden explained, "Raymond and Langston have a smelting plant where they melt down the gold and form it into ingots—gold bullion in the shape of bars. They keep this gold bullion in a vast vault down there in the basement. It is a fireproof steel vault like a bank vault. It is protected by a burglar-alarm system that does three things: First, it sets off a clang in the basement that would immediately

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

frighten off a burglar; second, it sets off a buzz-alarm in the apartment of Raymond and Langston; third, it registers on a device in that apartment; that is, if the vault dial is even turned a bit, Raymond and Langston know that someone has been down there tampering with their vault."

"How long has this been going on, Mr. Ogden?"

"Two years, and now it is over—mine is the last trip. In those two years, six million dollars have been delivered from the bandits in South America. They figure that's about what the traffic will bear. Now it's their job to transfer the gold bullion to permanent vaults in Geneva, Switzerland, before closing up shop here in the United States."

The Old Man cocked his head. "I don't quite understand, Mr. Ogden."

"What, Mr. Waverly?"

"If the gold finally is to be transported to Geneva, why wasn't it delivered by the couriers directly to Geneva?"

Howard Ogden crossed his long legs. "Well, sir, first, this is a Raymond and Langston operation and they're based here in the States. Second, the stuff is coming in as machine parts and Geneva

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

is not quite the place to sell machinery, while the United States is. Next, the trip to the United States is shorter, more direct, and those babies don't take any chances on an operation that's running smooth. The deal is to get it all accumulated and melted down to bars here in the States, and then to ship it over to Geneva in one single foolproof stroke."

Waverly's eyes were almost hidden within a mass of inquiring wrinkles. "Six million dollars in gold? What can they plan for a single foolproof stroke? Do you know, Mr. Ogden?"

Ogden smiled. "I'm a good listener and I had my ears cocked down there. I don't know it all but I *do* know a little."

"Please tell us what you know."

"Within the next few days, the gold is to be taken over to the Parley Circus. There's your foolproof stroke, Mr. Waverly. The Parley Circus is going over to Geneva. Who would look for gold in the vast activity and excitement of an entire circus shipping over to Europe?"

The Parley Circus! Waverly knew about the Parley Circus and had good reason to know. The

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Parley Circus was a famous Australian circus now in its last week at the Westbury Fairgrounds on Long Island, New York. For the past month the Parley Circus had been entertaining Americans on Long Island; in three days it was to fold its tents and ship out to Geneva, Switzerland.

Now Waverly's rapid questions stabbed at Ogden—who? what? when? where? But the long-legged man had been pumped dry of information.

"Just this one last thing," he said. "I heard a name, but I don't know what his connection is with the deal."

"What name?"

"Kenneth Craig."

The Old Man winced as though he had been struck. He gasped, then turned deathly pale. Solo and Kuryakin exchanged glances. They had heard about Kenneth Craig. Who hadn't? An Australian, a world-famous lion tamer, he was the star of the Parley Circus. But why should the mention of that name cause such an effect on the Old Man?

"Kenneth Craig," Waverly said gently. "What does Kenneth Craig have to do with this gunrunning caper?"

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Ogden sighed. "I don't know, Mr. Waverly. I've told you everything I do know."

"And I thank you for that, Mr. Ogden, and I shall not forget it." His smile was wan. "You will be our guest for the next few days. After that I shall turn you over to the federal people, but I shall tell them of your important cooperation with us here, and I shall make my personal recommendations to them."

"Thank you, sir."

Waverly looked beyond Ogden to Solo and Kuryakin. "You gentlemen will remain here with me." Then he clicked a lever on the console board. "Send up a couple of guards," he ordered. "Mr. Ogden is ready to return to Detention."

7. Agent or Double Agent?

SOLO AND KURYAKIN waited at the desk watching the Old Man, his face still pale as parchment. With trembling fingers Waverly filled his pipe, lit it, puffed in silence, and leaned back. The young men knew what had so profoundly moved their chief—the name Kenneth Craig. But why?

Finally the Old Man roused himself and addressed them.

“Gentlemen, we’re confronted with a double problem. Two problems.” He wet his lips and smiled faintly. “First and foremost is the one regarding Kenneth Craig.”

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Who the devil is Kenneth Craig?" exploded Illya Kuryakin.

"An Australian," replied the Old Man, "famous throughout the world as a lion tamer, traveling with the circus from country to country. But Kenneth Craig is also, gentlemen, a secret agent for United Network Command for Law Enforcement—one of us, if you please—one of U.N.C.L.E.'s valued and valuable international agents."

"Oh! My!" breathed Napoleon Solo.

"Perhaps now you understand my reaction." His lips formed a small, wrinkled smile. "My—consternation."

"But do we ever understand!" exclaimed Illya.

"Kenneth Craig—a name mentioned among traitors and reported to us by a confessed traitor."

"First and foremost, then," said Solo, "Kenneth Craig. In other words, is the guy *our* agent or a *double* agent? Is he working *for* us or *against* us? Is he with U.N.C.L.E. or is he really with T.H.R.U.S.H.?"

"Let us, gentlemen, examine that," muttered the Old Man through pipe smoke. "Howard Ogden gives us this name as involved in a massive gun-

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

running scheme initiated by T.H.R.U.S.H. This question, then: Why have we not had a single word from Kenneth Craig?" Waverly's eyes narrowed to thoughtful slits. "Two reasons."

"The first is entirely innocent," said Illya. "The man simply has no knowledge of the operation and therefore has nothing to report."

"The second is terribly guilty," said Solo. "The man has full knowledge of the operation, is himself a member of T.H.R.U.S.H., and is therefore a dangerous thorn in the side of U.N.C.L.E."

"Innocent or guilty?" Illya's face was alight with excitement.

"That shall be your job to find out, Mr. Kur-yakin." The Old Man had recovered, his voice alert and resonant. "Gentlemen, our work is now twofold: to thwart T.H.R.U.S.H. in its six-million-dollar caper, and, far more important, to discover whether or not U.N.C.L.E. has a deadly serpent in its midst. Is U.N.C.L.E. harboring a Judas?"

"I'm glad that's *his* job," said Solo.

"Your job, Mr. Solo, will be to investigate Raymond and Langston. You will go—with the suitcases, as Harry Owens—to the armaments firm."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Harry Owens." Solo winked at Illya. "That's me."

The Old Man opened a drawer of his desk, took out a leather-bound loose-leaf book, turned the pages slowly, finally stopped at a page, studied it, and murmured, "Evan Fairchild."

"Pardon?" said Illya.

"That's you. Evan Fairchild."

"Me, Tarzan," laughed Solo. "You, Evan, fair child."

A grim upward glance from the Old Man put down the ever-irrepressible spirits of the young men. Jocularly instantly ended.

"Evan Fairchild," said the Old Man, "a photo-journalist from *Scope*, the picture magazine. Tomorrow morning, Mr. Kuryakin, you will go out to Westbury as Evan Fairchild. Your supposed job as Fairchild is to spend three days with the Parley Circus for a picture story. Your real job will be Kenneth Craig—is he one of *us*, or one of *them*? Do you understand, Mr. Kuryakin?"

"Yessir."

The Old Man closed the leather-bound book. "By morning you will have the necessary creden-

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

tials, and the magazine will validate you in case of any inquiry." He looked toward Solo. "As for you, Mr. Harry Owens, your job, which will start at once, is to outflank and checkmate T.H.R.U.S.H.'s six-million-dollar maneuver." The Old Man sighed deeply. "Actually, gentlemen, you will be working together, hand in glove, the two jobs interweaving as one. And for that purpose, gentlemen, kindly go down to the lab now for the proper equipment."

"What do we tell the lab boys?" asked Solo.

"I'll do the telling." The Old Man grinned. "*Me Tarzan. You go.*"

Chuckling, the young men left the office, and at once Waverly flicked a key on the console board and informed the laboratory technicians of the circumstances and the requirements of the two U.N.C.L.E. agents who, from the moment they left the room, were already embarked on their perilous mission.

8. *Tools of the Trade*

WELL, GREETINGS, Mr. Owens, Mr. Fairchild."

There was laughter and banter in the laboratory all through the serious work of providing Solo and Illya with new tools for their ever-changing assignments, but first their old tools were checked—their Communicators. Each, of course, carried his Communicator, the innocent-looking pen which was both sender and receiver.

Hank Jenkins, the electronics expert, was the man in charge. He refurbished the Communicators, cleaned them, adjusted them, put in new transistors, and returned each to its owner.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Now, then," said Hank Jenkins, "we've got to set you guys up with a communications system of your own, a foolproof independent system between you—and what we've got for you is just what the doctor ordered."

And so Solo and Illya were introduced to the latest electronics marvel perfected by the U.N.C.L.E. scientists.

A lab dentist fitted each of them with a palate-plate similar to the bite-plate given to youngsters when they are undergoing dental orthodontia, except that these plastic bite-plates contained no pressure points to straighten teeth. Instead each was an ultrahigh-frequency transmitter, worn as a palate-plate in the mouth, and each palate-plate had a tiny spring which was to be clicked for the transmitter to go into action. Solo and Illya were given an opportunity to practice with their palate-plates, and then a lab doctor came to the fore.

With delicate surgical instruments the doctor inserted tiny, unseen earpieces into the right ear canal of each man.

"You guys can now be in independent communication within a thousand-mile radius," Jenkins

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

informed them. "But kindly remember—the palate-plates and earpieces are not to be removed; they remain a permanent part of you until you're off this assignment."

For his particular job Solo was furnished with additional equipment. New shoelaces were put into his shoes, each shoelace an electric-current detector, and he was given an object which looked like a dial on a safe. He was fully instructed as to the use and purpose of these devices. Then he was given Harry Owens' passport, his own photo having been substituted for Owens', and he was given the two suitcases into which had been packed every item they had originally contained.

"Okay?" said Jenkins.

"What about the rest of Owens' papers?"

"Not only his papers," laughed Jenkins, "but every other item belonging to Owens including his clothes, which we've altered to your size. Get undressed."

While Solo changed, Illya capered about, making jokes.

"His time for fun but not for long," said Jenkins. "He's next—cameras and stuff—but for Evan Fair-

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

child we've got until tomorrow morning. For you, my boy, it's now." And when Solo was dressed and ready, Jenkins said, "Up you go now, Mr. Owens, to the Old Man for your final briefing."

9. *Solo Delivers the Goods*

HARRY OWENS, carrying two heavy bags, passed from the bright sunshine of the street into the cool quiet of the Raymond and Langston showroom. A smiling salesman immediately approached him.

“May I help you, sir?”

“I should like to see Mr. Raymond. Or Mr. Langston.”

“Oh, would you?” The smile disappeared.

“I would,” said Solo.

“If you have something to sell, sir, the purchasing department—”

“I have nothing to sell.”

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

The salesman sniffed. "Well, unless you have an appointment, I'm sorry, but—"

"My name is Owens. Harry Owens."

"Mr. Owens? Oh, yes, of course." There was a quick shift in the salesman's attitude, and he was smiling again. "Yes, Mr. Owens. They're expecting you. Would you come this way, please?"

Solo following, the salesman walked quickly to an elevator at the rear, then stood aside and let Solo enter before him. The salesman touched the button for the second floor and they ascended in silence. In the large waiting room the salesman said to the only occupant, a red-haired secretary, "Mr. Owens. To see Mr. Raymond. Or Mr. Langston. Or both. He's expected."

The secretary glared. "I know he's expected. Thank you."

The salesman sidled back to the elevator and disappeared.

The secretary stood up and said, "Please come with me, Mr. Owens."

She led him along a broad, carpeted corridor to a burnished, carved mahogany door. She knocked.

"Come in," said a deep voice.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

She opened the door but did not go in.

"Mr. Owens," she announced.

"Yes, delighted," said the deep voice.

She permitted Solo to enter, closed the door behind him, and he was alone with two men.

"Ah, Mr. Owens," said the deep voice. "I'm Raymond, Felix Raymond." About fifty years of age, he was short, stout, with black crew-cut hair and black horn-rimmed glasses. He advanced upon Solo, hand outstretched. Solo put down the bags and shook hands with Felix Raymond. "Permit me," said Felix Raymond and waved toward the seated man now behind him. "My partner, Otis Langston."

It was an immense room, well furnished, with twin mahogany desks. Otis Langston stood up from one of the desks. About the same age as his partner, he was long, lean, lank, and bald, and he had a thin, piping voice.

"How do you do, Mr. Owens?"

Solo nodded. "Mr. Langston."

Langston looked at his watch. "We were getting worried about you."

"Why?" Solo said gruffly.



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"We called the airport. Your flight arrived quite some time ago."

"A man has to eat," said Solo, pretending sullen ill-humor. "These planes from South America, they feed you ladylike. I am not a lady. I'm a man with a man's appetite. I was hungry. I stopped off to eat. Anything wrong with stopping off to eat? A real meal? A man's meal?"

Raymond's laughter boomed. "Well, I'll be switched! Oh, these wonderful people they send us from South America. Here's a man carrying a hundred thousand dollars in gold and he stops off to eat. A real meal. A man's meal. Well, good for you, Mr. Owens. Good for you." And he took up the suitcases, carried them to his desk, and opened them.

Solo watched with interest.

The dark, crew-cut Raymond was obviously the metals expert. He went to a huge safe in a corner of the room, opened it, took out instruments, cut through the veneer of the iron-plated articles in the suitcases, used a magnifying glass, used his instruments, inspected carefully, and was finally thoroughly satisfied.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Very good, very good," he murmured.

The bald Langston helped Raymond return the machinery parts to the suitcases. Raymond carried the suitcases to the safe, shoved them in, extracted a packet of money from the safe, and locked it.

"Ten thousand dollars," he said. "Your fee, Mr. Owens."

"Thank you." Solo pocketed the packet.

"Aren't you going to count it?" piped Langston. Solo made a grin for Felix Raymond.

"Your partner's the suspicious type, isn't he?"

"Yes, that he is," boomed Raymond.

Solo looked toward Langston. "Mister, if you trusted me with a hundred thousand in gold, doesn't it figure that I'd trust you with ten percent of that in cash?"

"Ah, wonderful people, wonderful people they send us from South America," cried Raymond.

"Please, Mr. Owens. This way, please."

They led him out to the elevator and up to the next floor. There they showed him their sumptuous apartment.

"Beautiful," said Solo. "You've got a beautiful place here."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"It's where you're going to spend your next couple of weeks," squeaked Langston. "The two-week vacation you've been promised."

"Here?" said Solo, making his eyes round.

"The next-door apartment," boomed Raymond.

"The one next to ours, and quite as lovely."

Impatiently Langston said, "We don't have the time now to explain everything, Mr. Owens. You and your large appetite for a man's meal—you've sort of delayed us."

"A quick outline before we go." Raymond smiled. "This place—our place of business—closes down at five o'clock. We've got to hurry now, Mr. Langston and myself, and you'll virtually be shut in." He laughed. "Give you a chance to rest and relax. We'll be back at about seven, and then we'll have a chance to be proper hosts for you. Take you out for a late dinner and an evening on the town. But we really are in a hurry now, Mr. Owens. Come, let me show you your apartment."

It was next door. It was quite posh—three rooms: parlor, bedroom, and kitchen.

"We must be off now," said Raymond. "You'll be locked in at five, but we'll let you out again at

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

seven, and at that time we'll explain all the details to you. In the meantime, anything you wish you'll find right here. See you later, Mr. Owens."

Alone, Solo prowled his new domain. Cabinets and refrigerator were well stocked, but at the moment he was not interested in food. In the bedroom there was a walk-in closet, and as he inspected it he heard a murmur of voices. He pressed his ear against the far wall. It was thin and Solo knew it abutted upon the living room of the other apartment because, ear pressed, he could hear, quite clearly, Raymond and Langston conversing.

"We're already late for Westbury. . . ."

That was Raymond's hearty boom.

"He delayed us." That was Langston's thin wail.

"Otis, my dear man, what do you expect? These aren't people of our own social status. They have their quirks. They're bold, baffling—common adventurers. But he delivered, and that's all we can ask of him, isn't it?"

"All right! Enough of Harry Owens. He delivered and we delivered to him. He's been paid. We've much more important matters to attend. Final arrangements. Now, Felix, move!"

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"I'm ready. Who'll drive? Whose car?"

"Mine," declared Langston.

"So be it," said Raymond.

Then there were shuffling sounds and a door slammed. Then silence.

Solo retreated from the closet. Until five o'clock his activities were restricted. There wasn't a thing in the world he could do in furtherance of his duty. So he made himself a peanut-butter sandwich, washed it down with a glass of milk, took off his jacket, took off his shoes, opened his tie, and sprawled out on the bed in the bedroom, his mind teeming but his body resting.

10. *First Report*

ALTHOUGH HE could not make out particular sounds, he could feel the vibrations, the hum of activity, the faint, far-off thrum of business. But at five o'clock there was the beginning of cessation, bit by bit a deadening, and at five-thirty he was encased in a total, throbbing silence. Dead silence.

Solo got off the bed, put on his jacket, thought about putting on his shoes, and did not. In stocking feet, in the great silence of an empty building, he shuffled to the elevator and pressed the button for the basement.

He came out into a vast concrete room, a room

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

that was certainly forbidden to the employees of the firm of Raymond and Langston, although even if one did venture here, what could he see? At one end a smelting plant, not, in truth, improper for an armaments business dealing, as it did, with steel and iron. At the other end of the concrete basement was a huge steel vault.

Solo bestowed a casual glance at the smelting plant but did not go near it. His present business was with the vault. Shoeless feet cold on the concrete floor, he walked to the vault and around it, carefully inspecting, and in the rear he found a spot suitable for his purposes. That section of the vault had an overhanging ledge.

From a pocket of his jacket he extracted the dial instrument Jenkins had given him. Inserting his hand deeply into the space, he attached the instrument by its suction cups to the underside of the ledge. He stood back for a view. Perfect. The dial instrument could not be seen. Now the electronic dial would turn and whirl in silence when and if the dial on the door of the vault was used; it would register the combination to open the vault.

Solo sighed in satisfaction. The first work of

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

his adventure was accomplished. Now he took the Communicator from a pocket and gazed at it fondly. A marvelous scientific instrument. A direct communication to Headquarters, but on a revolving frequency that shifted second by second. Nobody in the world could overhear a conversation except those special persons equipped with an identical Communicator. He clicked it into operation, then spoke softly.

"Solo here, reporting. First report."

The Old Man's voice came through clear as a bell.

"Waverly here. Proceed with report. Over."

"I've been accepted as Owens. I'm alone in the building. Subjects have gone off to Westbury. I have attached the instrument to the vault. Neither the smelting plant nor the vault has been put to use yet. I'm down in the vaultroom, the basement. Any further instructions for the present? Over."

Waverly's chuckle crackled through the receiver.

"Were you paid your fee? Over."

"Ten thousand dollars in cash. How's Illya? Over."

"Validated by the magazine. He'll be off in the

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

morning. They've made contact with the press relations man there. He'll be expected and welcomed. Over."

"Any further instructions for now? Over."

"Nothing. Play it by ear and report when convenient. So far, so good. Nice work. Over and out."

There was a click and then silence.

Solo went back to his apartment. He made himself a meal, ate, then stalked about impatiently. There was nothing to do, so he took off his clothes and went to bed.

11. An Evening Chore

AT SEVEN-FIFTEEN in the evening Solo heard a car scrape to a stop. The sound came from the rear. He hurried out of the bedroom to the kitchen, where a window faced the rear. Standing taut at the side of the window, he looked down. It was an alley, wide and long. Some of the Raymond and Langston trucks were parked there. The rear would be the delivery entrance to the establishment. From a black sedan parked at the curb Otis Langston and Felix Raymond emerged and entered the building. Barefoot, Solo swiftly padded back to the bedroom and took position in the closet.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Finally he heard their voices faintly, coming from their living room. He entered the closet and pressed his ear to the far wall. Now he heard them more clearly, but there was not much to hear.

"Time now to take care of the delivery," Langston's thin voice piped.

"Yes," agreed Raymond's baritone.

"What about Owens?"

"Let's have a look."

Instantly Solo was out of the closet, closing the door. He leaped into the bed, pulled up the covers, and closed his eyes. Within a few minutes the men were in his bedroom. Solo snored.

"Asleep," whispered Raymond.

"Let's lock him in," whispered Langston. "For safety's sake. No sense his wandering around at this particular time."

"Right."

Napoleon Solo was displeased but could not voice his displeasure. Instead he snored angrily as the men left the room. Solo heard the key in the lock of the outside door and the turn of the lock. In a few moments he padded out and tried the knob. Locked. He returned to the bedroom and



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

opened the closet door, so at least he would know when they came back to their apartment. Then—what else could he do?—he sprawled out on the bed and waited.

Felix Raymond and Otis Langston took the elevator to the second floor. There, in their office, they removed their jackets, ties, and shirts. Raymond opened the safe and pulled out the suitcases. Each carrying a suitcase, they went to the elevator and down to the basement. Langston locked the door while Raymond opened the suitcases.

From a cabinet they took out long asbestos gowns and donned them. Then Raymond handed out the asbestos gloves, and they donned those. Next he took out the over-the-head, fiber glass, fireproof, transparent masks, and they placed these over their heads, the globelike masks fitting firmly on their shoulders. They smiled at one another—they looked like men from Mars.

Now, using bellows, Raymond fired up the smelting machines to intense heat. Item by item, Langston handed him the black pieces of machinery from the suitcases, and Raymond dropped

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

them into the simmering vat. Slowly they melted, the bubbling gold dripping through to the container beneath, the impurities kept back in the tight sieve above.

It was a long process, but finally it was completed.

Raymond poured the yellow, bubbling gold into the ingot molds, then thrust the molds into the freezing apparatus where they quickly hardened to glowing butter-bars of pure gold.

The job was done. The smelting machines were turned off and cooled. The men doffed the masks, the gloves, and the asbestos gowns, and Langston returned them to the cabinet and cleaned up the debris.

Raymond disconnected the burglar alarm, opened the vault, placed the gold ingots safely within, and closed the vault. Then he reestablished the alarm system.

Their work was finished. It had taken a long time.

Langston closed the suitcases and carried them. They went back upstairs to the office. There, Langston neatly stacked the suitcases. They took

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

up their garments and went upstairs to their apartment where, separately, they showered and shaved and dressed in resplendent tuxedos. It was ten o'clock.

Together they went next door to Solo's apartment. Quietly Langston unlocked the door, and they went through to the bedroom.

There, apparently, their man was asleep.

Raymond shook him, waking him.

12. Invitation Declined

AH," SOLO GROANED. "Ah, ah." He sat up in the bed, yawned, swung his feet to the floor, blinked. "Well, gentlemen! How completely darling you look—formal and all!"

Raymond grinned and bowed, but Langston, looking rather sour, came directly to the point.

"Mr. Owens," said Langston, "you're our guest and it is a part of our promise, a part of the deal, to show you a good time while you're here with us. Do, please, get dressed."

"Ah." Solo yawned.

"Mr. Owens," said Felix Raymond, "we have

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

reservations at a good supper club, the best, and we have plans for a grand evening, a night of amusement and entertainment. And you are our guest."

"Pass me," yawned Solo.

"Mr. Owens," said Otis Langston, "the reservations include you."

"Pass me, if you please, gentlemen. I hate to appear an ingrate, but I'm dead tired, beat. It's been a long day for me. I thank you, but I must decline. All I want is a good, long night's sleep."

Langston frowned.

Raymond smiled.

"Otis, our guest's desires are paramount. If he wishes to sleep, we must, as his hosts, grant him his wish. Are you sure, Mr. Owens?"

A wide-open yawn. "But *am* I sure, Mr. Raymond."

"If he wishes to sleep, he wishes to sleep," piped Langston. "Do you wish to sleep, Felix?"

"Not at all."

"Nor I." Langston looked with distaste upon Solo. "Then sleep, Mr. Owens. We've no idea when we'll be back. Late, though. We've a long and

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

interesting night in front of us."

"Enjoy yourselves," said Solo.

Langston, frowning, clearly showed his impatience.

"All right, then, settled. Coming, Felix?"

"A moment, please, Otis." Raymond returned his attention to Solo. From a pocket, he took a key and gave it to Solo. "Just in case, Mr. Owens, at any time you want to go out or come in." He laughed. "You're no prisoner here, you know. This key is to the rear door of the building—a private entrance for going out or coming in. That way, you don't have to go through the store downstairs."

"Thank you."

"Last call, Mr. Owens," boomed Raymond, "if you wish to join us."

"Thank you again. I'll take a rain check."

"Happy dreams, then. See you in the morning."

"Have fun, gentlemen."

"Thank you," said Langston and frowned at Raymond. "Felix, if we don't get a move on, they may preempt our reservation."

"Yes," said Raymond. "Good night, Mr. Owens."

"Good night, gentlemen."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

They went out, and Solo went to the window in the kitchen.

He saw them enter the black sedan and drive off. He yawned.

In truth, he *was* tired, and the comfortable bed in the bedroom offered a wonderful invitation, but he had work to do and now he had the opportunity to do that work.

Napoleon Solo got dressed, took the elevator, and descended once again to the vast subterranean chamber.

13. Second Report

IN THE CONCRETE basement, Solo first untied a shoelace and took it out of the shoe. He held one metal tip between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand, and held the other metal tip in his right hand as a pointer. Pointer outstretched, he advanced upon the vault, a faint vibration beginning to quiver between the thumb and the forefinger of his left hand. The device was reacting to the electric current connected to the burglar-alarm system. Solo traced the current along the hidden wires in the floor and then up a wall to a small fitted panel. He slid the panel open—and there was the

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

alarm switch. He disconnected it, then tied up his shoe again with the shoelace. The vault was his now to open—without clangs anywhere, without buzz alarms, without teletype marks being recorded on the secret tape somewhere in the Raymond and Langston apartment.

Now he went to the rear of the vault, pushed his hand beneath the ledge, and removed the dial instrument. For light he was using the reverse end of the Communicator, which served as a flashlight. He shone the beam of the flashlight on the dial instrument, touched a tiny button on the edge of the instrument, and silently the dial turned, right and left, left and right, number by number, and when its motion ceased Solo had memorized the vault combination.

He pocketed the instrument, went around, flashed the beam at the dial of the vault, made the turns, and opened the vault door. He entered the huge vault, then looked about. Gold gleamed. Six million dollars in gold, but surprisingly it did not take up much room. Gold, compressed to ingots, was a comparatively small quantity in bulk.

He reversed the Communicator, switching it on.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

The Old Man was probably home asleep, but there would be a deputy at the receiver at Headquarters to take communication.

"Solo here," he said to the Communicator. "Solo reporting."

The Old Man's voice came through, rasping wearily.

"Ready and waiting. How are you, lad? Over."

"I'm inside the vault. Owens gave us a straight deal. Ingots of gold like bars of butter. Hundreds of them. Our subjects are out for the evening. I advise we move in right now and take over. Over."

"Don't lose your head, mister. We have a subject out there in Westbury more important to us than all the gold they've got there in the vault. Come alive, Mr. Solo. Over."

"Correct. Sorry. Admit, I lost my head." Solo laughed. "I mean, surrounded with all this gold—six million bucks in gold. Sorry. Instructions, please. Over."

"Stay with it, lad. Stay right along with them. See if you can learn just when they intend to transport the stuff to Westbury. Then report. That's it for now. Nice work. Go to bed. Over and out."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Solo left the vault and shut its door. He restored the alarm switch to position. Then he took the elevator back upstairs to his apartment. His work for this day was done. He undressed and showered. He found a fresh tube of toothpaste, but his hosts had neglected to provide a toothbrush. He washed his teeth with his index finger, rinsed, trotted to the bedroom, tumbled into bed, and was immediately asleep.

14. *Illya in the Lions' Den*

AT NINE-THIRTY the next morning Illya Kuryakin arrived at the Parley Circus on the fairgrounds at Westbury, Long Island. His camera hung by a leather strap from one shoulder, and in a pocket he carried full credentials from *Scope* magazine.

It was a clear, brisk, lovely day, smelling of flowers and growing things, and Illya happily sucked in the sweet atmosphere like syrup through a straw. He felt alive, vibrant, buoyant.

He strolled along the circus grounds with its vast tents, wagons, and cages. There was no one in sight. It was too early for circus people to be

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

about. Finally he came to a rude little makeshift cabin that bore a legend on its door: BRIAN POWELL, PUBLICITY. Illya knocked and a hearty voice called, "Come in."

Brian Powell, seated at a desk, busily working over papers, was a brown-faced young man with a smile like a bright white explosion.

"Yes, sir," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"I'm Evan Fairchild."

The smile bloomed wider. Powell sprang to his feet, came around the desk, and they shook hands. "Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Fairchild. We're quite flattered around here—*Scope* showing this interest in us. When I got the call yesterday, I pretended to the boss I had a hand in fixing up this great publicity break for us." He winked. "You know how it is."

"Sure," said Illya.

"Anything I can do for you, just say the word."

"I've been walking about the grounds. Rather quiet out there."

"This time of the morning, Mr. Fairchild, it figures to be. Circus people sleep late."

"Do they sleep here, live here? On the grounds?"

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"The run-of-the-mill circus people do." He made a grimace. "Including me. But the stars have apartments in town, and Mr. Parley, he has a fine rented house miles from here, by the seashore."

Illya looked disappointed. "Thought I'd be able to talk to him this morning."

"And that you will, Mr. Fairchild. Mr. Parley, just like yours truly, is at work promptly at nine o'clock. If you like, you can see him right now. He knows you're due here, of course. His cabin's quite near. Shall we walk over?"

"Yes. Thank you."

"This way, Mr. Fairchild."

Outside, a wind had sprung up. They battled the wind to Parley's cabin, knocked, entered, and Powell closed the door against the wind.

"Mr. John Parley," said Powell. "Mr. Evan Fairchild from *Scope*."

"Charmed, I'm sure," said Parley, crisply enunciating.

"My pleasure," said Illya.

John Parley, in his mid-fifties, was tall, slender, handsome, rifle-straight, and silver-haired.

"Has Brian been showing you around?"

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Haven't had the time yet," smiled Powell. "Mr. Fairchild's only just arrived."

"The way I work," said Illya, "I don't like to be shown. I like to wander about on my own."

"Every man to his own manner," acknowledged Parley. "Please consider you have the freedom of the grounds, sir."

"Thank you," said Illya, "and right now, if you please, I'd like to get a few quick photos."

He snapped pictures of the handsome John Parley and then, seeing the look of disappointment on Powell's face, snapped a few of Brian Powell, whose bright smile quickly returned.

"How long do you intend to stay, Mr. Fairchild?" inquired Parley.

"A few days. The magazine wants a rather comprehensive story. I'll arrange to take a place in town."

"Very good," said Parley. "By the way, the circus has two performances a day—at two o'clock in the afternoon and at eight o'clock in the evening. Brian will give you a pass, so the folk here will know you've a right to take your pictures. You'll have your full freedom except, on occasion,

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

when I order the grounds cleared of all strangers."

"Thank you, sir."

"And now—is there anything else?" Parley's smile was a dismissal.

"Well, not here in this cabin," Illya said with a grin.

"Brian will be your man in charge. Anything you wish—ask Brian."

"Thank you again, Mr. Parley. You've been very kind."

Out again in the sunshine and wind, they went back to Powell's cabin where Powell wrote out the pass for Evan Fairchild.

"By the way," said Illya, "could I, by any chance, meet Kenneth Craig?"

"Thought you'd be coming around to asking that. Our star performer. Certainly you'll meet Craig, but right now it's somewhat early. He's not on the grounds yet. But I'll arrange it, Mr. Fairchild, never fear. And . . . er. . . ." Powell hesitated.

"Yes?" encouraged Illya.

"I mean—I'm no big shot, I know, but if you can get my picture in the magazine—I mean a magazine as important as *Scope*—my wife back in

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Australia, she'd feel right proud. . . ."

"If I can, I will," stammered Illya, knowing he could not ever do it. Feeling slightly guilty, he ended the conversation and went out alone into the bright, clean, windy morning.

He wandered about the circus grounds. He chatted with some of the early risers, but they were very few. He strolled about the immense grounds, taking pictures. Then, in a deserted area, he was attracted to a huge wagon, its rear doors bolted. He went a long way around the huge yellow-painted wagon and found that the front of the wagon was attached to a tremendous cage, big enough to contain a small army. The cage had a door latched from the outside. Illya lifted the latch, entered the cage, and commenced taking pictures through the bars of the cage. Brian's remark had stimulated a guilt, and the guilt had stimulated an idea. Illya, though only an amateur, was quite good as a photographer. Perhaps, he thought, if the pictures were good enough, *Scope* would really use them, and then Brian's wife in Australia would be proud and happy, and Brian would be proud and happy. As a matter of fact, everybody would

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

be proud and happy, including himself.

Shooting pictures, he saw out of the corner of his eye the door, which he had left open, snapped shut by a gust of wind. No crisis, he thought. He was not locked in. The bars were wide enough for his hand to slip through to open the latch. But then suddenly he heard a sound, a growl. He whirled and stood petrified.

Through a low swing door connecting wagon and cage, a lion appeared! Powerful, black-muzzled, heavy-maned, the lion, tail swishing, blinked yellow eyes in the sunshine.

Locked in a cage with a lion! Illya shot a glance toward the door leading outside—it was a long distance away! What to do? The lion, standing still, blinking, was looking at him, and he, standing still, was looking at the lion. He feared to make a sudden move. Slowly, ever so slowly, he backed toward the door—and stopped! Another lion pushed through the swing door into the cage and uttered a small sound. Perhaps to the lion it was a small sound; to Illya it was a fearful roar. What to do? How many more were in the huge wagon? Should he make a run for it and risk a leap from a

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

lion? Again he threw a quick glance over his shoulder. It was still a long distance to the door. He stood motionless, confused, hoping against hope that by some miracle, like a happy awakening from a dreadful nightmare, the massive, yellow-eyed, tail-swishing animals would disappear.

15. Invitation Accepted

STAY, KING! Stay, Mack-boy!"

It was a youthful voice, a girl's voice, but it rang with authority. It came from somewhere behind him. He did not dare turn, did not dare move.

"Stay! Attaboy! Good boys! Good cats!"

The great lions stood like statues, making a sound like a purr. "If those are purrs," thought Illya, "then I will happily live the rest of my life deprived of all sounds of purring."

He heard the latch come up, heard the cage door screech open, and then a vision passed before him. Young and pretty, flaxen-haired and blue-eyed,

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

attired in slacks and blouse that matched the color of her eyes, the vision proceeded at a smooth gait toward the lions, talking all the while.

"Good boys. Good old pussycats. Come on. Come along."

She slapped at their flanks, rubbed at their manes, kept on talking in an unexcited voice, soothingly giving orders, pointing toward the swing door. Finally the lions turned and padded through.

The girl bolted the swing door, whirled, and smiled at Illya.

"Are you all right, sir?"

"Uh." The monosyllabic grunt, under the circumstances, was the best he could manage.

"Would you like me to help you out, sir?"

"Thank you," he gasped. "I think I can make it without help."

The girl giggled. They went out of the cage and she latched the door.

"Whew!" breathed Illya. With shaking hands he replaced the camera in its leather case. In the warm sunshine he was perspiring like a runner at the end of a marathon race. He took a handkerchief



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

from a pocket, mopped his steaming face, returned the handkerchief, and looked through the bars of the cage toward the huge yellow wagon. "How many are there in there?" he asked.

"Six."

"Oh, my!"

"They're wonderful, sweet old lions, believe me."

"Yeah," groaned Illya. "Miss, please, who are you?"

"I'm Candy."

"Candy?"

"Short for Candace."

"But how you handled those lions!"

"Candy Craig. My father's Kenneth Craig. I'm sure you've heard of Kenneth Craig."

"But I never heard of you, my dear." Illya was beginning to recover. "And so young. How old, if I may ask?"

"Seventeen."

"Only seventeen? My goodness." Illya's recovery was coming along.

Candy's smiling blue eyes grew stern. "What happened wasn't your fault, sir, whoever you are."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

That swing door should have been bolted shut. The lions have ample room in the wagon and they're quite contented there until we let them out for work in the cages. That's the duty of the roustabouts, to securely lock in all the animals. But it always happens, toward the end of our stay anywhere—the roustabouts get kind of careless, negligent. You must not blame yourself, sir. It was not your fault, whoever you are."

"I am Evan Fairchild, a photo reporter for *Scope* magazine," said Illya, fully recovered. "And right now I'm going to take pictures of you, if you please."

The sparkling girl posed and Illya snapped. Then he put away the camera and said, "I'm dying to meet your father."

"I'm sure he'd be happy to meet you, Mr. Fairchild."

"How do we work it out?"

"Quite simple. He's at our apartment. I came out this morning to do chores here. But I'd be happy to take you back to meet my dad."

"How do we go, Miss Craig?"

"Candy."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"How do we go, Candy?"

"We walk." The blue eyes twinkled mischievously. "Unless you don't like to walk."

"I love to walk," said Illya.

They walked. And on the way, Illya tactfully questioning, Candy told him about herself.

She was Candace Craig, seventeen. All her life, because of her father's profession, she had lived with lions. She was, in fact, an accomplished lion tamer on her own, although she was not quite sure that lion taming would be her lifetime profession. She was still going to school and had lots of time to make up her mind. An Australian, this past year she had gone to school in England, and for the summer vacation she had come with her father to America. At home in Sydney, Australia, there were three little brothers in the care of her mother.

Their walk, a long one, ended at an imposing modern apartment house. Upstairs, a tall man opened the door for them. Candy introduced them.

"Mr. Evan Fairchild of *Scope* magazine," she said, "meet my dad, Kenneth Craig."

Craig shook hands and said, "Parley told me

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

you were coming." He was a big, blue-eyed, strapping blond man, smiling and amiable. His daughter, in her own feminine way, bore a great resemblance to him.

"Daddy, you'll never guess what happened this morning!"

"What happened, love?"

Candy told her father about Illya's misadventure.

Craig's steely blue eyes hardened. "Dangerous, Mr. Fairchild. Dangerous for any man to wander about alone on circus grounds."

"Mr. Craig," said Illya, "I shall wander no more—unescorted. I have learned my lesson the hard way."

"I'd be happy to serve as your escort, Mr. Fairchild."

"I'd be happy to have you, Mr. Craig. But do you have the time?"

"Time? Of course I have the time. We're quite bored, Candy and I, between performances. Where are you staying, Mr. Fairchild?"

"I haven't picked a place yet. Practically just got here."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"You'll stay here with us."

"Oh, no, please. I wouldn't presume."

"No presumption, Mr. Fairchild, not at all." The blond man smiled. "Fate. Don't ever fight fate, Mr. Fairchild. After all, my daughter saved you from the cats. They're quite docile and well-trained, my big cats, but just as humans are human, animals are animal. Frightened, all of us lash out, and in our fright we can do damage. How would *you* feel, Mr. Fairchild, if a total stranger suddenly invaded your home?"

"Frightened," said Illya.

"But you," laughed the broad-shouldered blond man, "would be less dangerous than a frightened lion. You could have been in quite a pickle if it weren't for Candy, thank heaven. My daughter has brought you here safe and sound, and I would appreciate it if you would stay here with us, as our guest, during your stay with our circus."

Illya was sorely tempted. "But do you have room?"

"Room? We have nothing *but* room!"

"*Do* we have room!" chortled the radiant Candy.

"Mr. Fairchild," Craig explained, "we had

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

to take what we could get for our temporary stay, and what we got was six rooms. Can you imagine? Six rooms! Just for Candy and myself. My goodness, we get lost here! We have room, Mr. Fairchild, an overabundance of room, and we would very much appreciate your being our guest."

"Thank you."

"Do you accept?"

"Gratefully."

"Good! Do you have a bag?"

"In a locker at the railroad station."

"Come along, then. My car's downstairs. We'll pick up your bag and do our best to make you comfortable here."

"Me, too, Daddy? May I?"

"Of course, sweet."

It could not be better, could it? His job was Kenneth Craig, and now he would be a lodger in the apartment of Kenneth Craig. Proximity was necessary for close investigation. "Thank you, yellow-eyed lions, into whose vast cage I happened to have wandered," Illya mused.

They returned with his bag from the locker in the railroad station. Illya got settled in Craig's

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

apartment, and then they had lunch cooked by the sprightly Candy. Lunch consisted of grilled ham steak, golden scrambled eggs, crispy luscious French fries, and coffee for the men and tea for her.

"Quite a cook, my Candy."

"It was delicious."

And then they took him to the fairgrounds and showed him about—but this time escorted—and he took pictures of them, of clowns, of objects of interest, of people and animals, and then they returned to the apartment so that Craig could dress for his afternoon performance.

In his room, waiting for Craig, Illya sat alone, thinking. Were he called upon to cast his vote now, his vote, fervently, would be in favor of Kenneth Craig. Could this fine, robust, happy, outgoing man be a traitor, a double-dealer, a turncoat? Could a man like this, a doting father of a seventeen-year-old girl, be a double agent? Would a man mixed up in treason blithely accompany a stranger, a reporter, on his rounds? Would a man deeply engaged in a complex plot involving international intrigue voluntarily offer the comforts of his home

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

to a total stranger? Wouldn't a man weighed down with conscience, riddled with guilt, rather shunt away a stranger? I vote in *favor* of Kenneth Craig, but I have no proof. My vote is from hunch, feel, instinct. . . .

"We're ready," called Kenneth Craig. "How're you doing, Mr. Fairchild?"

"Ready," returned Illya Kuryakin.

He sat with Candy Craig in a special box and watched Craig's wondrous performance with the six lions. Craig, dressed in boots and safari outfit, two loaded guns in holsters strapped about his middle, put the lions through their paces without whip, stick, or chair. Using only his voice, his hands, and his body, he received complete obedience from the massive, grunting, growling, saber-toothed animals. Can a man whom wild beasts trust be himself untrustworthy? Can a loving father rapturously admired by an innocent girl be a treacherous snake turning his fangs upon his own? No, voted Illya, joining in the thunderous applause at the finish of Kenneth Craig's marvelous performance.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Illya's vote was one hundred percent in favor of the man who was the object of his scrutiny, but his conclusions were a matter of instinct rather than proof, and so his work was unfinished.

16. *Sight-Seeing*

SOLO HAD AWAKENED to the fine, bright morning sunshine on his eyelids, thin stripes of sunshine slanting in through the slats of the Venetian blinds. Out of bed, he leisurely showered, shaved, and dressed. He listened through the closet wall. There were no sounds in the adjacent apartment. He stayed in the bedroom for more than an hour—not a sound from the apartment next door, which meant that his hosts were about their business, whatever that present business might be. He shrugged and left the apartment.

He took the elevator down to the second floor

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

and stepped out into the reception room. The clock on the wall said ten after eleven.

"Good morning," greeted the red-haired secretary, "and a most beautiful morning it is, Mr. Owens."

"Good morning, Miss—"

"Dunhill," the girl said, smiling prettily. "Miss Dunhill."

"Good morning, Miss Dunhill."

"It's a lovely day out, Mr. Owens. A bit windy but simply lovely."

Solo gestured toward the offices. "The gentlemen?"

The girl made a face, frowning through her smile.

"Do you *have* to see them?"

Solo shook his head. "I don't have to. I just thought—"

"Then think the better of it," said Miss Dunhill. She hunched up her shoulders. "They're awfully busy and in an awful mood. I've got orders that they're not to be disturbed—unless it's a matter of utmost importance, and when I got those orders I almost had my head bitten off. Ugh!" She shuddered. "When they're in a bad mood, gosh, they're

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

impossible!" She smiled again. "So, Mr. Owens, if it's a matter of utmost importance. . . ."

Solo grinned. "It's a matter of no importance at all."

"Then I advise you to stay clear."

"When will they be free?"

"They're not *going* to be free—not, at least, during the business day. Matter of fact, they're not even going out to lunch; I'm to order their lunch sent in. They're going to be cooped in there till five o'clock, that I guarantee."

"Do you have your lunch sent in, too?"

"Not me. I go out to lunch." And she smiled up sweetly at the handsome young man standing above her, and suddenly Solo felt the fool. There had been, without his actually meaning it, an implication on his part that he was about to invite her to lunch and she appeared quite willing to accept such an invitation. She was an attractive young lady, and at another time, as Napoleon Solo, it would have been most pleasant to have lunch with Miss Dunhill. But he was working on a job. He was *not* Napoleon Solo. He was Harry Owens.

Lamely he said, "Well, thank you, Miss Dunhill.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Thank you for warning me that this is no time to barge in on the gentlemen."

"Not at all, Mr. Owens," said Miss Dunhill, looking disappointed.

Awkwardly Solo made his way to the elevator and was glad to escape into its lonely confines. He pushed the button for the main floor but went out, as previously directed, through the rear.

The alley was windy and dark, the tall buildings on either side shutting off the sun, and it was not until he rounded the corner that he was able to agree with Miss Dunhill's estimate of the weather—it was a bright, clear, breezy, sunny day.

Briskly now he walked up Park Avenue until he found what he was seeking—a stationery store. He purchased a small cardboard box, tissue paper, wrapping paper, and cellophane tape. Then he walked again until he discovered a post office. Inside, he carefully packed the dial instrument in tissue within the box, wrapped the box, sealed it, addressed it to Alexander Waverly, and mailed it off. The instrument had accomplished its purpose—no sense keeping it about on his person. Suddenly he realized he was very hungry.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Out again on the sunny street, he found a restaurant. He first ordered orange juice, to the astonishment of the waitress—it was already afternoon—then bacon and eggs, toast, and coffee, and he ravenously enjoyed every morsel. His appetite satisfied, he sat back, sipping coffee and thinking. Illya, as Evan Fairchild, was out at Westbury on the tail of Kenneth Craig, but here he was in New York as Harry Owens. What would he, as Harry Owens, do in New York that he could properly report back to Raymond and Langston?

Miss Dunhill, sometime during the day, would report to her employers that Harry Owens had attempted to see them. Good. Quite natural for Harry Owens. She would also tell her employers that she had informed Owens that they would be busy until at least five o'clock. That left Harry Owens footloose and free until that time. What then, with free time, would Harry Owens, a stranger in the city, do in the city? He would go sight-seeing, that's what he would do. Without enthusiasm Solo paid his check and prepared for activities that would make a normal day's report back to Raymond and Langston. He sighed and

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

went out to see sights that he already knew very well. After all, New York was Solo's home town, but it was necessary to make the rounds, just in case his hosts checked up on him.

Suddenly he remembered something else that Harry Owens naturally would do. Harry Owens was carrying ten thousand dollars in cash on his person. What would Harry Owens naturally do to protect that money for the next two weeks? He would deposit it in a bank, that's what he would do.

With purpose now, Solo strode the streets for a bank, found one, entered, established a checking account with a first deposit of ten thousand dollars, and happily gathered deposit slip and checkbook for later display to Felix Raymond and Otis Langston.

Then he tramped the city, making a record for Harry Owens. He went to the United Nations, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, the Coliseum, Lincoln Center, and the Central Park Zoo, where he munched frankfurters and looked at animals. When he returned wearily to his temporary home, it was ten minutes after five. Before

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

even going to his own apartment, he knocked on the door of his hosts' apartment.

At once Otis Langston opened the door, but when Langston saw who it was an expression of disappointment settled on his face.

"Oh. Owens."

"Expecting someone else?" Solo inquired innocently.

"Well . . . er . . . uh. . ."

From within, Raymond's voice boomed, "How are you, Owens? Have a nice day?"

Solo virtually had to push himself in, knowing he was far from welcome. Smilingly he produced the material from the bank and smilingly he told about his day's sight-seeing. There were no smiles at all from Raymond and Langston, but at least Solo knew they had no suspicions about him, that he was, to them, Harry Owens and no one else. But they got rid of him and were not even subtle about doing it. Langston opened the door, said, "Nice of you to drop in, Mr. Owens, but you've had a rather busy day, and I'd advise that you rest up a bit, relax," and that was that.

Solo entered his apartment, latched his door

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

from the inside, got himself a glass of milk and a sandwich, brought that to the bedroom, opened the closet door, pulled up a chair, and sat, eating, listening, awaiting developments.

17. *Guessing Games*

AT FOUR O'CLOCK that afternoon, Alexander Waverly, in his office, had heard a familiar voice crackle from the ceiling loudspeaker. It was Kuryakin on the Communicator.

"Kuryakin here. Reporting."

Instantly Waverly had struck the key on the console board for outside communication.

"Waverly here. Come in, Mr. Kuryakin. I read you clearly. Over."

"First report, Chief. Contact made. Close. I'm living with the guy in his apartment, on his invitation. He's got his kid here with him in this

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

country, a daughter, Candy. Great kid, and he seems to me a great guy."

Waverly interrupted. "Do you have anything solid, Mr. Kuryakin?" Waverly coughed. "Solid information to report? Over."

"First report, Chief. Settling in. Close contact. Solid. I'm in a position for character study and overall impression. Interested? Over."

Waverly sighed. "Always interested in what you have to say, Mr. Kuryakin. Over."

"The man is a loving father to his daughter and a kind host to me. He seems to be perfectly happy, does not seem to be burdened down by any secret work—that is, secret work on *their* side. My guess, he is not involved. Over."

"That's not what you were sent out to Westbury for, Mr. Kuryakin—not to play guessing games. You were sent out for facts. Proof. Understood? Over."

"Yes, Chief. Understood. Over."

"You've made the contact—excellent. Now it's your job to stay close. We know they intend to transport the gold through the Parley Circus. What we *don't* know is whether Craig is mixed in

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

it. That's your job. So stay close and keep your eyes and ears open. By the way, where are you now? Over."

"I'm alone down in an exit ramp under the grandstand. The circus is on now, and I'm with Miss Candy in a box; I excused myself for a moment. There's a two o'clock show that goes on until four-thirty, then an eight o'clock show that lasts until about ten-thirty. Any special orders? Over."

"No. You're doing fine. Stay with it, stick close to Craig, and report when convenient. Over and out."

Illya put away the Communicator, came up out of the dark ramp, and rejoined Candy in the sunshine of the box. Craig's performance was, of course, over, but the other acts were interesting, breathtaking, thrilling. It was a fine circus.

"What happens to your dad in between?" asked Illya.

"In between what?" Candy smiled.

"I mean, now."

"Well, after the lions are back in the wagon, after Dad's performance is over, he goes back to

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

one of the cabins, showers, and rests. Then he puts on a nice new uniform and comes out for his bow at the grand finale."

"And after that?" asked Illya.

"Well, today we'll show you about after the show so you can take more pictures. Then we'll go back to the apartment for early dinner. We've planned a lovely dinner for you, Mr. Fairchild. Fruit cocktail, marvelous steaks with mashed potatoes, and I toss up the greatest green salad you've ever tasted. Then, for dessert, Dad's special—rice pudding."

Illya's mouth watered. "Sounds wonderful. I'm glad it's an *early* dinner."

"Hungry, Mr. Fairchild?"

"You've just made me *very* hungry, Miss Craig."

At that moment John Parley stepped into their private box. The silver-haired man wore an official badge on his lapel, and around his waist was a wide leather belt from which hung a large leather holster.

"Enjoying our circus, Mr. Fairchild?"

"Immensely, Mr. Parley."

"And I see you've wisely chosen yourself a lovely



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

guide," laughed Parley. "The most beautiful our circus can offer."

"Thank you," murmured Candy.

"And remarkably talented," continued Parley. "You should watch her performance sometime."

"Thank you again," said Candy, blushing now.

"Not at all, my dear. Those are entirely deserved compliments," said Parley and then bowed, did a little wave with his right hand, and went on his way.

Illya, frowning, watched until he disappeared from view.

"Why does he wear a gun?" he asked.

"Oh, don't you know him? I was certain you did. He called you by name."

"Of course I know him," Illya reassured the girl whose face had clouded because she thought she had breached etiquette by not introducing them.

"John Parley, the boss."

Candy was smiling again. "That's why he wears a gun."

"I don't get it," said Illya.

"All the circus officials, when they move about the grounds, have guns with them—just in case

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

any of the animals get loose. They're not real guns, Mr. Fairchild. They're tranquilizer dart guns. A shot from one of them would put the animal to sleep."

"I see," Illya nodded, "and what's this about *your* performances, young lady? You didn't tell me."

Candy's soft features were suffused again with a charming blush.

"On Saturdays and Sundays, the afternoon shows, when there are lots of kids in the stands," she said. "Then I'm all dressed up in a beautiful spangled silk costume. Dad does a few tricks with the lions, then he introduces me, steps out of the cage, and I take over for the rest of the performance."

"Well, I didn't know you were *that* professional."

"I am," she admitted modestly but truthfully.

And then the last act, tumbling clowns, ended. The grand finale began, all the performers appeared, the music of trumpets blared to high crescendo, and wave upon wave of thunderous applause rolled through the huge arena.

18. Name-Dropping

ALMOST IMMEDIATELY Solo's stakeout by the open bedroom closet door was rewarded. Raymond and Langston were receiving a guest, and now Solo was inside the closet, his ear pressed to the far wall.

"Tito! How are you?" piped Langston.

"Good to see you, Tito," boomed Raymond.

"We finish up the job. Yes, gentlemen?" rasped Tito in a thick, guttural voice tinged with a foreign accent.

"Join us in a bit of refreshment, Tito?" asked Langston.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

There was silence, then the tinkle of ice in glasses.

Solo could distinguish them by their voices. Langston's was a thin, reedy voice; Raymond's was the booming baritone; Tito's was the deep rasp with the foreign blur.

"Today we finish up, and you're the helper, Tito," boomed Raymond. "Everything's in order. Right, Otis?"

"Right," said Langston.

"The passports are all in order?" asked Raymond.

"Right," said Langston.

"You, Tito?"

"Sure, passport," rasped Tito. "But the business—how does it work, Mr. Raymond?"

"We carry out the stuff to the truck," responded Raymond. "It'll take quite a number of trips. We'll use the bags that Owens brought."

"Right," piped Langston.

"I've notified Parley," said Raymond. "He'll be ready."

Parley, thought Solo. John Parley, the owner of the circus. So he's one of them, a member of

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

T.H.R.U.S.H. That's a piece of information the Old Man will appreciate knowing.

"We'll have the truck loaded by six o'clock," said Raymond. "The stuff won't take up much room—very little in fact. Ingots of gold are quite compact. Six million doesn't take up too much room, believe me, Tito."

"If you say so, Mr. Raymond," laughed Tito, "I believe it."

"We take off at six o'clock," said Langston. "We figure an hour to get there, maybe a little less, depending on traffic. We'll be there by seven, which is between shows of the circus. Parley will order the grounds cleared, so we'll be free to work. You'll drive the truck, Tito. We'll be inside the truck, in back."

"Sure, I drive," said Tito. "But how does the business work, gentlemen?"

"When we get there," explained Raymond, "we're supposed to be health inspectors on a sudden evening inspection. We're supposed to be looking in on the animals' quarters, where they're fed. Parley will have Craig take the lions out of the big wagon and keep them happy in the outdoor

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

cage while we go into the big wagon from the rear."

Craig, thought Solo. Kenneth Craig. But is he one of them or not? Could be either way. Could be he was working with them—or it could be he would simply be following Parley's orders to work the lions in the outdoor cage while the health inspectors entered the big wagon from the rear and did their work there. Please, Solo begged silently, talk more about Kenneth Craig. But they did not.

"So how does it work?" Tito persisted.

"The feeding troughs in the big wagon, the lions' feeding troughs, have false bottoms," said Raymond. "It'll be a quick, easy job to load the ingots into the false bottoms. Who would ever think—who would dare!—to look there? The lions themselves are the protection!"

"Wonderful!" growled Tito. "Beautiful! Clever, Mr. Raymond. Very clever."

Solo, listening, had to agree.

"And then," laughed Raymond, "a quick change in the plans of Parley Circus. It'll pack up and take off in the morning. There are chartered planes already cleared, already waiting. A quick change

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

is always good. The unexpected is always good. Any tickets already sold for the few future performances—the money will be refunded.”

“How do you like it, Tito?” asked Langston.

“Beautiful,” said Tito.

“And we’ll fly out with the circus,” boomed Raymond. “Parley’s already arranged that. We’ll be on the list as part of the circus crew.”

“What happens to health inspectors?” asked Tito.

“That’s not official,” laughed Langston. “That’s only in case anybody asks questions this evening—and nobody figures to question. Parley will have the grounds clear for us.”

There was a silence, and then Tito asked, “What about this business here? Raymond and Langston in America? The munitions firm?”

“The lawyers will handle that,” said Raymond. “They know already that Otis and I plan a long trip to Europe. This firm will be dissolved. The lawyers already have their instructions to handle that. Lawyers here in America and lawyers in Australia will work together, liquidating the business here in America.”

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Beautiful," rasped Tito.

"We'll deliver the goods to Geneva," said Langston, "and then finally our long job will be over. Six million dollars in gold! We'll be given enormous bonuses and then a full year's vacation before the next assignment. You, too, Tito. You've been our sturdy right arm all this while down there in South America."

"Yeah, me, sturdy right arm," rasped Tito. "Me, I take the vacation on the French Riviera. Me, I like the sun; I love a warm climate. Me, gentlemen," he laughed, "I am ready for this vacation."

"Not yet, dear Tito," said Raymond. "Now we've got work—the most important, the final work. All ready, gentlemen?"

"Ready," said Tito.

"Ready," said Langston.

"Let's go, gentlemen."

There were shuffling sounds, then the slam of a door, then silence. Solo backed out of the closet, quietly closing the door. He went to the kitchen and stationed himself at the window, looking down into the alley. He saw the truck at the curb, but he could not make out the number of the license plate.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

He took the Communicator from his pocket and clicked it on.

"Solo here. Urgent. Chief, are you there? Over."

"We're here, Mr. Solo. What do you have for us? Over."

19. *Unmasked!*

ALEXANDER WAVERLY, eyes haggard, deep furrows in his brow, sat stiffly in his swivel chair, listening intently. His clothes were rumpled; his shirt collar was open; his tie, knot askew, hung limply. Mr. Waverly had had a bad night. He had not gone home. He had remained at Headquarters. He had slept some, but his sleep had been fitful, and he had returned to his post at eight o'clock in the morning.

Seated opposite him across the desk were U.N.C.L.E. agents Jack O'Keefe and Aaron Johnson who, like Solo and Kuryakin, were a team.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

They, like Waverly, were intent upon the ceiling loudspeaker through which came Solo's voice, metallic via his Communicator.

"... and we are now at a key point. The building is closed and normal business for the day is completed. I am in my apartment on the third floor, by a kitchen window, looking out on the alley in the rear. At this time they are packing the ingots for delivery to the Parley Circus. There is a truck waiting in the alley, but I cannot give you the license number. From my vantage point up here, the license plate is obscured. Parley—John Parley—is connected with them. He is definitely a part of the T.H.R.U.S.H. organization."

Waverly interrupted. "Craig? What about Kenneth Craig? Over."

"Craig *may* be working with them, and he may not. What word from Illya? Over."

"In favor of Craig, but only opinion. He has no facts as yet, no proof. Continue. Over."

"Raymond and Langston have an assistant. So far I have only his first name—Tito. Have you got that? Over."

"Yes—Tito. Proceed. Over."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"They called him their sturdy right arm in South America. Seems he's the guy who was in charge of the operation down there. But he's up here now for good. He'll be going off with them."

Again Waverly interrupted. "Going off? Where?"

"Easy, Chief."

"Yes, Mr. Solo. Proceed. Over."

"They are to pack the ingots into the truck downstairs. There's no sign of them yet. Ingots are to be placed in the lions' feeding troughs at the Parley Circus. Craig will take the lions out of the wagon and into an outdoor cage so that they can complete that part of the operation."

"So he is involved!"

"Not a hundred percent. They're coming in as health inspectors, to look over the feeding deal on the animals. Parley can legitimately order Craig to take the lions out of their wagon. That way Craig is busy with the lions in the outdoor cage, and they are free to do what they want inside the wagon. That's no proof that Craig is involved. Could be—but also might not be. Clear? Over."

"Okay. Proceed. Over."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"They plan to leave here at six o'clock and to get to Westbury by seven. At that time they do what they're supposed to do, and then the three of them stay over. Parley Circus leaves for Switzerland 'unexpectedly' by chartered planes, already waiting, tomorrow morning. And they, with the gold, go with the circus. Are you reading me, Chief? Over."

"The three go with the circus in the morning. Proceed, Mr. Solo. Over."

"Any idea who this Tito is? Over."

"No. Over."

Suddenly Solo's voice, through the loudspeaker, had a new urgency.

"Here they come! Langston and Tito. They're carrying the stuff in the suitcases that the machinery parts were in. I'm watching them now through the side of my window. They're opening the suitcases, putting the yellow bars into the truck. Raymond's still inside. It figures for a number of trips with the suitcases. Hold everything. I'm watching."

There was a long pause. Waverly lit his pipe. O'Keefe and Johnson sat motionless.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Then Solo's voice crackled again from the loud-speaker.

"Langston took the two empty suitcases back into the building. I saw this Tito. A short, dark, swarthy man—looks like a wrestler. He's wearing a blue suit, white sport shirt open at the neck, no tie. Tight jacket with a nice big bulge in it. Figures for a gun. Langston had a bulge in his jacket, too. With six million bucks in gold, all three figure to be armed." There was a pause, then Solo's voice came through again. "Tito's inside the truck, in the driver's seat. The skinny guy, Langston, he's gone back into the building with the two empty bags. Tito is the lookout now, downstairs. Langston and Raymond will be bringing out the rest of the stuff. I'm waiting for a few minutes and then I'm going down. Okay, Chief? Over."

"I don't want you to interfere now, Mr. Solo. I don't want you to risk any wild action. Over."

"No wild action, Chief. I'll go down, real casual, as Harry Owens. I'm not going to offer to help, nothing like that. I'm going to be a real big dope, period. Harry Owens coming out for a breath of air. But what I want to get for you is the license

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

plate number of the truck. Okay, Chief? Over.”

“Okay, but be careful. Over.”

“I’m going to cut off communication now. But I’ll be back to you, without fail, between six and six-fifteen. Got that? Six and six-fifteen. Definite. Over.”

“We’ll hear from you between six and six-fifteen. Very good, Mr. Solo. Now, remember, you’ve done your job. Leave the rest to us. Careful. No wild action, no wild chances. That’s an order. Over.”

“But you do want that license plate number, don’t you? Over.”

“I don’t want you to take any risks getting it, though.” A chuckle. “Yes, we want it but we can live without it. I don’t want you taking any further risks, Mr. Solo. Easy does it, lad. Over.”

“No risks, no interference. I’ll be Harry Owens coming out for a breath of air. I’ll talk to you again between six and six-fifteen. Over and out now.”

Solo watched. Carefully, quietly, he raised the window. When Langston and Raymond came out with the loaded suitcases, he could hear them talking as they opened the suitcases and packed the ingots into the truck. Their voices floated up eerily



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

from the alley, but clearly. Tito remained in the truck, in the cab up front, as Langston and Raymond went back for more.

Solo was heeding the Old Man's orders—no risks, no chances. He was waiting for the final trip with the suitcases before he went down for a quick look at the license plate. Langston and Raymond went in and out several more times, and then Solo heard what he was waiting for.

"This is it," boomed Raymond. "The last load."

They opened the suitcases and began transferring the last of the ingots into the truck.

Quickly Solo trotted to the elevator.

When he came out into the cool, dim alley, Langston was tossing the empty suitcases into the rear of the truck. Raymond, smiling in satisfaction with a job well done, stood nearby.

Raymond saw him first.

"Well, if it isn't our Mr. Owens."

"Out for a breath of air," said Solo, noting the license plate number and committing it to memory.

The lank Langston turned and sniffed.

"Mr. Owens," he grunted, acknowledging Solo's presence without enthusiasm.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Hi," said Solo.

"A special delivery," piped Langston. "A very special delivery. We've got to do it ourselves."

"And for this special delivery we've got a special driver," said Raymond, "a friend of yours, Tito Zagoro. Hey, Tito," he boomed. "Here's Harry Owens."

Tito Zagoro came out of the cab of the truck, whipped out a gun, and pointed it at Napoleon Solo.

Raymond laughed.

"Is this the way a friend is greeted in your country?"

"In my country or not in my country, this is no friend."

"Harry Owens is not a friend?"

"This man is not Harry Owens," said Tito Zagoro, his gun leveled at Solo's heart.

20. *More Guessing Games*

NOW THERE WERE three guns pointing at Solo.

Thinly Langston chirped, "If he's not Harry Owens, then who *is* he?"

"Who, I don't know," retorted Tito. "But not Harry. Harry Owens he is not!"

"All right, mister. Inside!" Felix Raymond, his fleshy face murderously mottled in wrath, pressed the muzzle of his pistol into Solo's ribs. "Inside, or I'll finish you off right here!"

Discretion being the better part of valor, Napoleon Solo did not resist. Three pistols were at least two pistols too many. He obeyed and was

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

hustled downstairs to the basement room.

"Okay, buster," Raymond demanded. "Just who are you?"

"Harry Owens," said Solo.

"A lie!" roared Tito.

"Tito, are you mad?" wheezed Langston. "He delivered the machinery parts. He brought us a hundred thousand dollars' worth of gold. He *must* be Owens."

"He's not Owens," rasped Tito.

"Then who is he?" cried Langston.

"I'm Harry Owens," said Solo, compounding the confusion.

"Is he?" demanded Langston of Tito. "Take a good look."

"I have looked! An impostor! I know Harry Owens! He is *not*!"

Raymond, of the three, was the first to regain his composure.

"An impostor," he said quietly. "Some kind of con man, working some angle or other. Probably knocked off Owens and substituted himself." He came close to Solo. "All right, mister. If that's what you did, you have earned my high regard.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Maybe we can use a guy like you. Last call, buster. What's your game?"

"I'm Harry Owens."

"A lie!" roared Tito.

"He's the liar, not me," said Solo calmly. "If anybody's working a game, *he* is. For some reason—some reason of his own—he's denying me—denying my identity."

Tito gasped, choking in anger, the other two looking at him curiously. Solo's life hung in the balance—and Solo lost.

"No," Langston said. "We've known Tito Zagoro too long, too many years. His word against the word of this man—this total stranger. We'd be crazy to doubt Tito."

Tito exposed harsh yellow teeth in a smile of gratitude.

"I thank you," he grunted.

"Don't thank us," growled Raymond. "We should thank you and apologize for doubting you—even for a moment. We've got a wise bird here, Otis, smart enough to make us doubt one of our own people, one of the very *best* of our own people. Now, who is he, and what the devil's his game?"

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

A thought occurred to Langston. His long, sal-low face went ashen.

"Perhaps—perhaps from U.N.C.L.E.?"

Raymond shook his head. "No," he stated positively. "If he were from U.N.C.L.E. he wouldn't be hanging around here this long, and certainly he'd no longer be alone. By now they'd be upon us, all over us. We couldn't have gone all the way to this point. No. If he were from U.N.C.L.E. we'd be out of business by now."

Give the devil his due, thought Solo. You're a clever man, Mr. Raymond. All things being equal, you have stated U.N.C.L.E.'s case. But you do not know of our doubts about Kenneth Craig; you do not know that a part of our job, actually the most important part, is to determine whether or not Kenneth Craig is a double agent. Otherwise, you are so right, Mr. Raymond—by now Raymond and Langston would indeed be out of business.

Langston nodded.

"Correct. Which means he's a single operator, a shrewd adventurer. He killed Owens, then took over his identity."

"So why," asked Tito reasonably, "didn't he

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

skip out with the two valises? Why, like a dummy, did he deliver one hundred thousand dollars in gold?"

"No dummy," replied Langston. "He squeezed the information out of Owens and then decided to try for the whole bit. He delivered the hundred thousand in order to swallow up six million, and if it weren't for you, Tito, he might have gotten away with it. His last trick is still unplayed because you recognized that he isn't Harry Owens. All right, now, Tito," Langston snapped. "Move!"

"What?"

"Frisk him!"

Tito put away his gun. As Langston and Raymond stood by with leveled pistols, he searched Solo roughly. He looked over whatever Solo had on his person—passport, wallet, money, keys, papers, and the Communicator, which of course Tito mistook for an ordinary pen—and threw each article to the floor.

"Nothing," Tito said. "No gun, no weapon. Only the phony stuff to make him out to be Harry Owens."

Tito took out his pistol and backed away.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Solo stood alone, facing three armed men.

He could not fight them. The slightest attempt would mean death. He shrugged, stood silent. While there is life, there is hope.

Raymond crossed to the wall panel, slid it open, and turned off the burglar alarm. Then quickly he worked the combination of the vault and swung open the vault door.

"All right, mister," he ordered Solo. "Get in!"

Solo hesitated. Tito shoved him roughly.

"In!"

They pushed him into the recess of the dark vault and shut the thick steel door. Raymond whirled the dial, smiling grimly.

"All right, gentlemen. Let's go."

21. *"Kitten on the Keys"*

ILLYA KURYAKIN had enjoyed a fine dinner with the amiable Craigs. Now he sat with Kenneth Craig, who was enjoying a fat after-dinner cigar, in the entrance room to the apartment, which was its living room. The big blond man was natty in a safari outfit, his guns in their holsters strapped about him. The room was gay with sunshine. Although it was almost six o'clock, it was still broad daylight; it was summer and, what with daylight saving time, there would not be darkness until after eight.

Illya pointed to Craig's pistols.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Do you *always* wear those?"

"Always when I'm in uniform."

"Why?" inquired Illya.

"It's a part of my business."

Illya frowned. "I don't quite understand."

Craig laughed. "In a business like mine, Mr. Fairchild, you have to be devoted."

"I still don't understand," Illya said, smiling.

Craig's face took on a serious mien. "With the big cats, one must always be on the ready. When you're putting them through their paces, you never can tell. One of them might suddenly decide to act up, even playfully. But a playful lion, Mr. Fairchild, can be quite dangerous to a mortal man. A shot from a pistol—the very noise—will stop him dead in his tracks. Then I can take over again—order him, cajole him, even whisper to him—and he'll listen. The shot, of course, would be up in the air. I have never had to shoot directly at a lion in all of my career. But you must remember, of course, that the animals I work with have had a long period of training with me. There are certain people who have an empathy, a feel, for those majestic animals, kings of the jungle. Somehow the

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

lions react quite docilely to people with that instinct. Candy, for instance. She handles them as though she were born to them, and they react to her with a softness, a kindness—with, somehow, a form of love. I believe in love, Mr. Fairchild. I believe that even wild animals—if they're not frightened and are given love—will return love."

He believes in kindness and love. Can this man be a traitor?

Illya laughed. "But how does that explain wearing guns in the living room?"

"In my profession—at least for me—I believe in wearing them always, and while I'm in uniform at least they don't look too much out of place. What I mean, Mr. Fairchild, is that just as you must be accustomed to the clothes you're wearing, not feel that they're an impediment, so must I be accustomed to the guns, their hanging at my sides, their leverage, their weight. Nothing must be an interference when I'm working with my beasts in the big cage, and especially not the guns. They must be a *part* of me, like my clothes and like your clothes are to you, Mr. Fairchild. And so whenever possible I wear my guns."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Yes, I see," said Illya.

Candy, from somewhere in the rear of the apartment, entered the living room.

"Ah, our lovely Candy," said Illya, "who makes the greatest tossed green salad in all this living world."

"Thank you," she said, but quite evidently Candy was perturbed. "I've been looking all over. Daddy, I simply can't find my keys."

"Keys?" said Craig. "Why do you need your keys?"

"I'm going out."

"Got a date?" Craig asked, smiling.

"I'm going to see that the kittens are fed, that the swing door's closed, and that the roustabouts are taking care of things."

"Kittens," laughed Craig, glancing toward Illya.

"Well, a cat when he's small is a kitten," Candy said logically.

"These cats, love, aren't small anymore."

Candy smiled a compassionate smile at the grown-ups.

"Well, to me they're still kittens."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"And with you, love, somehow they still act like kittens."

"But where are my keys?"

"Kitten on the keys," said Illya, making a joke.

"Don't worry your pretty head about keys, dear," said Craig. "Just push the button on the door so it won't lock. Mr. Fairchild and I will be right here till you come back. Won't we, sir?"

"Sure," said Illya.

"Right," said Candy.

"Don't be too long, love."

"All right, Daddy."

Candy went to the door, snapped the button, tried the outer knob to make sure the door was unlocked, waved, went out, and quietly closed the door behind her.

At the circus, she attended to the lions. Her handling of the huge cats was truly a wonder. She petted them, whispered cooingly, wrapped her arms around them, kissed them. Candy loved her lions. They had been fed; they were contented and happy. She went out again, making sure the huge doors of the yellow wagon were bolted. Then up front, through the cage, she inspected the swing



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

door. Securely locked. Good. She had been critical of the roustabouts who had left the swing door unbolted this morning, and they had been duly penitent. She remembered poor Mr. Fairchild, standing there in the middle of the cage, frightened stiff. Now she laughed—but it could have been dangerous. She was happy she had come along in time. *Well, she thought, all's well that ends well.*

On her way to the roustabouts' quarters, where there were always fun and jokes and sparkling conversation, she met Mr. Parley. He was still wearing his official badge and his dart gun.

"Hi, Candy."

"Hi, Mr. Parley."

"Where you heading for?"

"The roustabouts' quarters."

"Your dad there?"

"No, sir. Why?"

"Is he on the grounds?"

"No, Mr. Parley."

"I want to talk to him. It's rather important."

"He's home."

"Oh. Good. I'll go right over."

"You won't even have to ring," Candy bubbled.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Pardon?"

Candy laughed. "I've misplaced my keys, so I left the door unlocked. Would you take a message, please, Mr. Parley?"

"For whom?"

"Dad."

"Sure."

"Please tell him I've gone over to the roustabouts' quarters. I should be there for about—well—about an hour. I don't want him to worry. Would you please tell him?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you."

"Not at all."

"'Bye, Mr. Parley."

"'Bye."

22. Say "U.N.C.L.E."

NAPOLEON SOLO, hot and perspiring in the dark, fetid atmosphere of the sealed vault, was at first confused and distraught. His initial thought was the natural one—self-preservation. How long could he live in here? How long could he survive?

It was a high, wide vault. There was sufficient room for him to stand up, sufficient room for him to move about. In the closed-in darkness, hands outstretched, feeling with his fingers, he inspected. No vent, no opening, no place for air to come through. On his knees now, crawling, he repeated the inspection. No vent. No opening. No air.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

He sat Indian fashion, ankles at his thighs. Hot air rises. He felt cooler, sitting down, but already he was bathed in perspiration and already the slow suffocation was beginning.

The first confusion was passing, the terror diminishing. He must think! He must think constructively! How long did he have to live? Perhaps an hour. In an hour the oxygen would be exhausted and he would die. A slow death. A choking, suffocating death. No. He comforted himself. He would not suffer. In time he would lapse into a coma; unconscious, he would not suffer; he would be unaware of the desperate, convulsive struggle of his body fighting against the suffocating death. It was small comfort, but it was a comfort.

Now. What to do? His hand crept to the pocket for the Communicator. Of course it was not there! There was no way to get through to the Old Man. *And then, already gasping, in the heat, in the already foul air, he remembered!*

He took the palate-plate from his mouth, clicked the switch, and put it back in his mouth. He spoke, and even in this horrible predicament, felt

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

ridiculous. When he talked to the Communicator, he was talking to *something*! Now he was talking, just talking, to nothing—like an actor, alone, saying important lines but to no one, committing his lines to memory. But he was *not* an actor, and he was *not* committing lines to memory. He was talking into blackness, hoping against hope—to save his life! He spoke rapidly, fervently.

“Illya. I don’t know exactly how far away you are. I don’t know if you can hear me, if this darned thing works. I’m in trouble—bad trouble. You’re going to have to get through to Waverly, but first I must know if I’ve gotten through to you. Illya, can you hear me? If so, come back to me. Give me the word. I’m waiting. I’ll wait till I hear you. I’m waiting. Over.”

In the comfortable living room Kenneth Craig saw the handsome young reporter from *Scope* magazine suddenly grow pale. Mr. Fairchild, taut, tense, stood up from his chair.

This was it, thought Illya. Suddenly the entire responsibility was right here upon him, and it had come to the point of climax. Solo’s voice had been

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

as tight as the skin of an African drum. Bad trouble, Solo had said, and had said that he, Illya, would have to reach Alexander Waverly. That meant that Solo, wherever he was, was under restraint, deprived of his Communicator, and compelled to use the newfangled mouthpiece in an effort to contact Illya. *Can you hear me?* Solo had asked. *Give me the word,* he had pleaded. *I'm waiting.*

And so Illya knew that their adventure was at final phase—it was down to the wire. There was no longer opportunity for the coddling of the suspect, no more time for gentle probing, no more room for further experiment. This was it! Now! *Right now Kenneth Craig had to be put to the test!*

Craig was on his feet, his head tilted, his eyes slitted, questioning, as he gazed uncomprehendingly at the obviously excited Mr. Evan Fairchild.

Illya positioned himself opposite Kenneth Craig. The man was armed with two heavy pistols, but now was the time of test! In his heart he believed Craig to be an honorable man, but, to paraphrase Waverly: What you feel in your heart is not

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

enough, not evidence, not proof. One's heart can be deceiving. Hunch and intuition are not always dependable.

He stationed himself where, if necessary, he could frustrate an attack. If Craig drew a gun Illya would leap forward, and it would be a fight, possibly to the death. But that was his job and he had to face the possibilities, and the time was now! Kenneth Craig must be put to the test, but at the same time Solo must know that he had gotten through.

The tall, powerful man watched in amazement as the reporter from *Scope* took a palate-plate from his mouth, rubbed his thumb along its edge, then reinserted it in his mouth.

"Napoleon," Illya said, "I heard you clear. I have some preliminary remarks to make now. I'm alone with Kenneth Craig and the remarks are necessary. Hang on, my friend."

Napoleon!

Craig's eyes bulged from their sockets like blue-tinted golf balls. The man from *Scope* was talking into thin air—and *he was talking to Napoleon*. He had called Napoleon his friend! Protectively,

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Craig's right hand stole up to the gun holster. He might very well need protection against this mild-mannered slender man who, up to now apparently sane, was talking into thin air to Napoleon!

"Mr. Craig," Illya said, "I have some interesting information to impart to you, and it concerns U.N.C.L.E."

At that precise moment John Parley arrived at Kenneth Craig's door. He heard the word U.N.C.L.E. and recognized the voice as that of Fairchild from *Scope*. His hand poised on the knob, he waited, listening.

"Mr. Craig," said Illya, "my name is not Evan Fairchild. It is Illya Kuryakin. I am an U.N.C.L.E. agent—and so are you, unless you've decided to throw in your lot with T.H.R.U.S.H. I'm in the middle of an emergency now, Mr. Craig, and I must act. Do you know what's been going on here?"

"No," breathed Craig, but the holster was open and his hand held the butt of the gun.

"Do you know about the gold from South America?"

"Gold? South America?"

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"You don't know?"

"I don't know."

Illya smiled. It was a small smile, the beginning of a happy smile, but not yet a smile of full satisfaction.

"Mr. Craig, I must put you to the test—now! It's imperative that I communicate with Headquarters, and you, as an agent of U.N.C.L.E., know just how I intend to do that. If you're a double dealer—if you've gone over to T.H.R.U.S.H.—then you can stop me. At least you can try to stop me." Illya pointed. "You've got your hand on your pistol. So how will it be, Mr. Craig? Are you T.H.R.U.S.H. or U.N.C.L.E.?"

Blue eyes looked into blue eyes. Intensity, like a current of electricity, fairly crackled between them. Then Craig's hand fell away from his pistol.

"U.N.C.L.E.," he said.

"Sir, I can't tell you how much this pleases me."

"Why?"

"I'll explain that later."

"What's this all about?"

"You're going to find out, Mr. Craig—right here and now."



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

But Craig did not find out right then and there, because John Parley, dart gun in hand, plunged in and shot them, first Craig, then Kuryakin, almost simultaneously.

Smiling grimly, the silver-haired man stood over them, shaking his head in grudging admiration. Leave it to U.N.C.L.E. Kenneth Craig, of all people, was an U.N.C.L.E. agent. And this seemingly harmless reporter from *Scope* was an U.N.C.L.E. agent. Somehow U.N.C.L.E. had learned of the plot to transport the gold, but U.N.C.L.E. had not learned enough. That was quite evident—otherwise U.N.C.L.E. agents would have already taken over the Parley Circus.

No. U.N.C.L.E. had learned *something*, but not all. Why, the man from *Scope* had not even been certain about Kenneth Craig. There was time for T.H.R.U.S.H. to save the situation.

He put away the dart gun, securely bound the unconscious men with cords loosened from the Venetian blinds, and dragged them to a bedroom. From a pocket of the safari uniform he took Craig's keys, locked the men in the apartment, and hurried back to the circus grounds.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

There was time. The reporter from *Scope* had not gotten through to his headquarters.

Craig had been necessary to the plan but not absolutely essential—because of Candy. Candy could handle the lions outside their wagon and keep them happy in the outdoor cage while the false bottoms of the feeding troughs were loaded with the gold. He would spring it on Candy suddenly—a sudden swoop of health inspectors, no time to bring in Craig from the apartment. She was a young girl; she would be easy to handle. Raymond, Langston, and Tito were on their way; soon they would be here. The immediate problem was to keep the girl on the grounds so that she would be available when needed.

He found her in the roustabouts' quarters and asked her to accompany him back to his cabin.

"Candy, how would you like to work the lions tonight—for this evening's performance?"

"But what about Dad?"

"It was his idea," said Parley smoothly. "I've just come from there. He wanted the evening off to go out with his new friend, Evan Fairchild. Of course I agreed."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Candy looked toward the phone. "May I call him?"

"Certainly, dear. But they've already gone out."

"May I try?"

"Please do." He knew there would be no answer. The tranquilizer darts put animals to sleep for three hours. They had once run a test on humans. Unless chemically revived, the humans remained unconscious for twelve hours. Tying them up had been no more than a reflex action. It had not been necessary.

Candy called home. There was no answer.

"I am the messenger boy," laughed Parley. "Your dad gave me a message for you. You are to rest here on the grounds and change here on the grounds. He told me to remind you that you have no keys. He was going to lock the apartment when he went out with Mr. Fairchild." Parley himself had the keys in his own pocket. "They'll be home, waiting for you, after the evening performance!"

"Gosh!" Candy was thrilled. "An evening performance!"

"Your dad has complete confidence in you, and

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

so have I." He smiled, pleased with himself.

"Thank you, Mr. Parley."

He was keeping her available. He needed her to handle the lions in the outdoor cage while the "inspectors" in the huge yellow wagon, having entered through the rear, transferred the gold ingots to the feeding troughs.

There would not be an evening performance. That, now, was essential. Even as the troughs were being loaded, he would be giving orders for the circus to dismantle and pack. Their traveling plans would have to be further pushed forward. The circus would take off for Switzerland—not tomorrow morning—but tonight. It would have to be tonight! He would so inform his masters.

John Parley did not know it, but that was precisely what his masters were going to inform him.

23. *Change in Course*

WITH TITO driving, the truck rolled along the highway, but well within the speed limit. Tito was aware of the enormous value of the cargo he was carrying, and he was far too wise to risk a brush with the law. How would it look to have a cop order the truck to the roadside and take a peek into its interior? It made Tito laugh and he felt silly laughing alone. A cop might not recognize the ingots for what they were, but a cop might become curious—*very* curious—about an ordinary delivery truck that contained, *inside*, two well-dressed, executive-type businessmen. Laughing,

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Tito leaned back and cocked an ear, but could not hear them talking.

They were seated on the cool metal, Raymond smoking a fragrant cigar.

"Otis, you must not worry," he said to the sallow, pinch-faced Langston.

"But in truth, I am; yes, I am worried."

Raymond laughed. "It's sticking out all over you." He drew on his cigar and let the smoke dribble slowly from his mouth. "Otis, that man in the vault can't do us any harm. He had his chance, but that's over. Now he's finished."

Langston nodded lugubriously. "That's what I'm worried about."

"My dear friend," said Raymond, "dead men tell no tales. And by the time he's found we'll be far away and safe."

"Felix, it was out-and-out murder."

"You've been involved in murder before."

"But murder skillfully planned. This job was forced on us—and we botched it."

"Botched!" Raymond grimaced. "How?"

"We left his things strewn about on the floor of the vaultroom."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"So what? Harry Owens' personal belongings. So what?"

Langston shook his head. "We won't be in the office tomorrow."

"Of course not, and everybody there knows it. Miss Dunhill knows we've left for Europe. She doesn't know how, when, or where—none of them do—and that's just the way we want it."

"But she *does* know about Harry Owens."

Raymond scowled. "Otis, you're talking in circles."

"No, I'm not. She knows Owens was staying as our guest. Suddenly—no Owens."

"So she'll think he went with us."

"But suppose somebody goes down to the vault-room tomorrow morning. There's Owens' stuff all over the floor, but no Owens. Suppose somebody gets suspicious. Suppose the police are called and the vault is opened."

"So what? Nobody can tie that murder to us."

"But they'd be looking for us, if only for routine questioning, and that's what worries me. If by morning we were already out of the country, I wouldn't mind. The higher-ups in T.H.R.U.S.H.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

will know how to hide us, how to cover up for us. They'll know how to level it out, smooth things over. In a short time we'd be perfectly in the clear. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Felix, we've always been flexible, you and I—which is one of the reasons we've lasted this long. When the seas are stormy, we know when to change course."

Raymond's eyes narrowed shrewdly. He puffed the cigar and nodded behind the smoke. "What change in course do you propose?"

"That the circus moves tonight. Any objection?"

"None whatever. Every word you said made sense." He grinned. "That's a fine brain ticking away in that bald head. Thank you for some excellent thinking, Mr. Langston."

Langston smiled crookedly, appreciatively. Felix did not throw his compliments around lightly. "How quickly can they wrap it up out there in Westbury?"

"It's a fine circus, but it's actually fairly small. If Parley cracks the whip on them—and he will—then with all hands participating, the whole deal

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

can be packed into the vans in an hour."

"That's the way it must be, Felix."

"That's the way it *will* be."

Nervously Langston looked at his watch. "It's six-fifteen."

"The traffic's been good. No delays. The way it's going, we'll be there a bit before seven." He tilted the cigar in his teeth and puffed, savoring the fragrant odor. "Still worried, my friend?"

"A little," said Langston, "but not as much as before. I feel better now."

24. *Ten Long Minutes*

TIME AND AGAIN Waverly's eyes shifted to the silent electric clock on the wall. Somehow as the minutes went by the sweep hand seemed to be moving more slowly, ever more slowly. Six o'clock. Five after six. Ten after.

Waverly was not anxious about the situation in Westbury. Solo's quick report had been complete and definite. Waverly knew the gold was being moved, who was moving it, how and where. The circus would not be traveling until tomorrow morning. U.N.C.L.E. agents had all night to swoop down on the Parley Circus. But there would be no

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

move made until he had word from Kuryakin on Kenneth Craig, nor would he even begin to make plans until he got the all clear from Solo.

Jack O'Keefe and Aaron Johnson, fretting for action, were compelled to restraint by the circumstances. They were fully briefed and waited impatiently.

The Old Man filled his pipe and lit it.

O'Keefe glanced at the clock. "Chief, it's six-fifteen."

"I know what time it is," Waverly growled unhappily.

"He said between six and six-fifteen. Six-fifteen at the outside."

"We'll give him five more minutes."

They sat in silence until six-twenty, and then the Old Man came alive. He turned knobs on the console board, adjusting to the frequency of Solo's Communicator. Then he pressed a small button which would set up a vibrancy in the Communicator—the signal for Solo to call in.

They waited, their heads turned up toward the ceiling loudspeaker.

Silence. No whisper of sound came back to them.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"I'm afraid he's in trouble," O'Keefe said slowly.

Johnson was on his feet. "Give us the word, Chief!"

"Or maybe he's *not* in trouble," said O'Keefe, correcting himself.

"Please explain that, Mr. O'Keefe. But quickly, please."

"Maybe he talked his way into going with them. Maybe he's in the truck with them right now. If that's the case he just can't come back to you, Chief—in the presence of Raymond and Langston, he just can't take out the Communicator and talk to you."

"But I told him not to interfere, not to risk any wild action."

O'Keefe kept hoping against hope. "Maybe there was no risk, no wild action. Maybe, even, they *invited* him."

The Old Man slapped his hands on the desk and stood up. "All right, gentlemen, get a move on! I want a quick inspection of that place and a quick report. I'll be right here, waiting. Maybe I'll have heard from him by the time you communicate with me; if so, I'll inform you. Remember, the building's

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

closed. You'll have to open doors. Take picklocks and whatever else necessary. And let me have word as soon as possible. Now get going!"

Siren howling, the unmarked car raced through the city streets, its overhead red light flashing. O'Keefe was at the wheel with Johnson alongside, urging more speed. But when they arrived at the vicinity of the Raymond and Langston Building, O'Keefe stopped the siren, turned off the red flash, and reduced the speed. He made the turn into the alley behind the building and there the car slid to a stop at the curb.

Johnson, with the picklock, opened the door in short order. Inside, they took the elevator directly to the third floor where they inspected the Raymond and Langston apartment and then the guest apartment. There were no signs of disorder, no signs of a fight or struggle. On the second floor they had a quick look into the offices—all in order. Then they took the elevator down to the basement. The vaultroom was dark. It took a moment before Johnson found the light switch. Then, as illumination flooded the room, they gasped.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Papers, passport, wallet, keys—all were strewn on the floor—and there—that innocent-looking fountain pen—Solo's Communicator! O'Keefe picked it up, that and the passport. He looked at the passport, saw the name in it, tossed it aside. He looked toward Johnson and was shocked at Johnson's deathly pallor. Johnson was pointing at the vault; his mouth was working, but no sound came out. No sound was necessary. Before Johnson could utter a word, O'Keefe understood and a shiver of horror trembled through his body.

"Could be," he croaked.

He was holding Solo's Communicator as though clinging to it. He had his own, but he used the one in his hand. He clicked it on, coughing. His mouth was dry. He wet his lips.

"O'Keefe here. Chief? Over."

"Talk! Over."

"Signs of a struggle in the vaultroom downstairs. All of Owens' stuff all over the floor; also Solo's Communicator. Johnson got a wild idea that maybe they locked him in the vault. Could be, could not be, but we've got to give it a whirl—"

Waverly interrupted.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Stay where you are! Over and out!"

Waverly touched levers on the console board.

"I want ten men," he snapped. "In two cars. Downstairs. Ready to go. I'll join them."

The answer crackled from the loudspeaker. "Yes, Chief."

"Colin Walker must be one of those ten men. Tell him to take all his equipment."

"Yes, Chief."

"And Dr. Blaine from the lab must be another of the men. He's to have all his equipment, too."

"Right, Chief."

"And send in Brad Randall. Right away. Hop to it!"

"Yessir."

Waverly clicked off.

In two minutes Brad Randall, breathless, in shirt sleeves, pushed through the door.

"Chief?"

Randall was a burly white-haired man, one of the inside executives.

"Take over in here," Waverly ordered.

"Right."

"I'm expecting word from Kuryakin. If it comes

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

through, contact me immediately."

"Right."

"That's it, Brad. Take care of the store."

Waverly hurried to the door.

"Chief," Randall called softly.

Waverly turned.

"Take it easy, Chief. We're neither of us as young as we used to be."

Waverly smiled, nodded, waved, and went out.

O'Keefe and Johnson heard them coming, and when they entered the vaultroom there was quite a gang of them—eleven men, including Alexander Waverly. Doc Blaine was also among them, but most important, Colin Walker. Colin Walker was the most accomplished safecracker this side of Leavenworth Penitentiary. Colin Walker, an important U.N.C.L.E. agent, was a genius with safes, locks, and vaults. During the trip to lower Park Avenue Colin Walker had been briefed.

Now, immediately, he went to work. He used an instrument that looked like a doctor's stethoscope. Headset clamped to his ears, his left hand held the listening device pressed against the steel of the

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

vault while his right hand slowly twisted and turned the dial. His face was like granite, rigid in concentration, as he listened and judged the inner clickings of the tumblers.

O'Keefe and Johnson stood directly behind him. The others were gathered in little groups—except Waverly. Alone, he paced up and down relentlessly, and he kept looking at his watch.

It took ten minutes. Even for a genius like Colin Walker, it took ten . . . long . . . minutes. Then, with a sigh, he grasped the handle and opened the vault door.

Instantly O'Keefe and Johnson rushed in—and came out slowly, carrying carefully between them the unconscious form of Napoleon Solo.

They laid him on the floor.

25. *The Old Man Takes Charge*

EXCITEMENT BUZZED through the group like a nest of wasps.

"Quiet!" roared Waverly.

The doctor was on his knees, the side of his head pressed against Solo's heart. When he looked up he was smiling.

"He's alive. He'll be all right, I'm sure. Please stand back, gentlemen." He looked toward Waverly. "My bag, please."

Waverly brought the little black bag.

This time the doctor used his stethoscope. Johnson nudged O'Keefe and O'Keefe nodded. Doc

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Blaine's expression of concentration as he examined Solo was oddly similar to what had been Walker's expression as he had listened to the clickings of the tumblers.

The doctor snapped off the stethoscope and laid it aside.

"No damage. He'll be all right. Somebody help me, please."

Johnson knelt beside him. "What, Doc?"

"We'll take off his jacket, shirt, and tie."

They lifted the unconscious Solo to a sitting position, removed his jacket, shirt, and tie, and gently laid him back. The doctor swabbed Solo's arm with an antiseptic, then, using a hypodermic, injected a stimulant.

"He'll come around in a few moments."

Sure enough, in a few moments Solo's eyes fluttered. Color seeped back into his face and a tremulous sigh escaped his lips. Then suddenly his brown eyes opened wide. He stared, frowned—and suddenly remembered.

He saw the men gathered about him and focused on Alexander Waverly.

"Something—something happened to Illya."



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

He tried to get up. The doctor kept him sitting.

"Easy, Mr. Solo."

"I—I'm all right."

"How do you feel?"

"Thirsty."

"And a little bit weak? A little shaky?"

"No. Just thirsty."

"Somebody get him a glass of water."

Somebody went out and returned with a glass of water, which Solo drank thirstily. Then he stood up. O'Keefe made an effort to support him, but Solo shook him off. "I'm okay."

"Kuryakin?" the Old Man asked.

"They shoved me into the vault. They had guns on me, three of them. They locked me in." He shuddered. "Murder in there. I couldn't get back to you, Chief—they stripped me of all my stuff, including the Communicator. But then I remembered my mouthpiece—the crazy walkie-talkie that connected me to Illya. I put it into operation and I did get through to him."

"Then why didn't he instantly report to me? I've had no word from him!"

"Please, sir."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Yes. Forgive me," said the Old Man, silently rebuking himself for the impatient interruption.

"I got through to him," said Solo, "and he got back to me. He told me he was alone with Kenneth Craig."

"Where?"

"He didn't say where. He said that before reporting to you he had some preliminary remarks to make to Craig. It was an emergency, and he had to test him right then and there. Illya admitted to Craig that he was an U.N.C.L.E. man and that it was imperative that he, Illya, communicate with Headquarters. And right there he challenged Craig. If Craig was a double agent, then Craig could try to stop him. Naturally with this independent walkie-talkie system, I couldn't hear Craig, but I sure could hear Illya and he was thoroughly satisfied. I can tell you now that Kenneth Craig is no traitor, no double agent. He is one of us. He simply had no idea of the plotting going on around him."

"Wonderful," murmured Waverly. "Yes; then what happened?"

"Suddenly—silence. Something happened to them! I think somebody must have attacked them,

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

overpowered them. I kept trying to get back to Illya. I got no answer. Just a sound—a sound of breathing. Then I passed out.”

“A sound of breathing,” the Old Man repeated thoughtfully. Then alertly he asked, “You’re still wearing that earpiece, Mr. Solo?”

Solo grinned. “I couldn’t take it out if I wanted to.”

There was an excited murmur from the circle of U.N.C.L.E. men crowded about them.

“Do you hear anything now, Mr. Solo?”

Solo held up his hand. A hush fell. He listened intently.

“A sound of breathing,” he announced.

“That means he still has his mouthpiece in operation,” declared the Old Man. “It also means that he can’t answer for one of two reasons. He’s either bound and gagged or he’s unconscious.”

“Yes,” said Solo.

Quickly the Old Man pulled his Communicator from a pocket and clicked it on.

“Waverly here. Brad? Over.”

“Yes, Chief. Over.” Randall’s calm voice came through clearly.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"I'm at the Raymond and Langston Building. I want the scanning truck down here right away! And I want Phil Bankhead inside that truck!"

"Bankhead?" It came through like a shot—explosively. Brad Randall was finally excited. Philip Bankhead was a major scientist, a professor—the man in charge of the Science Section of U.N.C.L.E. Professor Bankhead was not one to be traveling about in trucks. He had assistants for that purpose. "Did you say Bankhead? Over."

"That's what I said. Bankhead! In the scanning truck! Now get to it! Over."

"Right, Chief."

"Immediately."

"Right, Chief."

"Over and out."

The Old Man put away the Communicator. His eyes were bright and shining. He felt young. For a change he was out of the office and once again, as in his youth, out in the field of operation.

"Dr. Blaine," he snapped.

"Chief?"

"Get that thing out of Mr. Solo's ear."

"Yes, Chief."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Using long pincers, the doctor extracted the object from Solo's ear canal. Solo smiled in relief.

"Mr. Solo."

"Chief?" Solo's smile ended.

"How long will it take us to get to Westbury?"

"Less than an hour."

"I—I hope we'll be in time."

There could be no reply to that. Only silence—a deep, serious silence—finally broken by Dr. Blaine.

"Chief," he said, holding the earpiece in the pincers, "what do you want me to do with this miniature listening device?"

"Guard it carefully," said the Old Man. "It's going to lead us directly where we want to go."

26. *Candy Lulls the Lions*

THE DOOR OF Parley's cabin swung open without a knock.

Felix Raymond peered in. Parley was alone.

"All right for us to come in?"

Parley nodded. Raymond entered, followed by Langston and Tito.

Parley, who had been cleaning out his desk, slammed shut an open drawer and came out from behind the desk. Raymond noticed how pale he was, forehead furrowed, mouth grim.

"What's the matter, John?"

"Mr. Raymond, we've got to move the circus as

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

quickly as possible! We've got to get out—tonight!”

In astonishment Raymond looked at his two companions, and then back to Parley.

“That’s just what *I* was going to tell *you*, John.”

“I don’t know about your reasons, Mr. Raymond, but mine are most important—absolutely urgent!”

“All right. Let’s hear them,” growled Raymond.

Parley rapidly recited what he had overheard at Craig’s door and what had ensued thereafter. “They’re both back there, unconscious, in Craig’s apartment. I’ve already given orders for the dismantling of the circus.”

“Good.”

“Can you imagine—Kenneth Craig, a man from U.N.C.L.E.? And this reporter from *Scope* magazine—a man from U.N.C.L.E.?”

“And the guy in the vault,” piped Langston. “No question in my mind now. Also from U.N.C.L.E.”

“What guy in what vault?” demanded Parley.

Raymond quickly filled him in. “That’s why I was going to tell *you* that the circus would have to move out tonight.”

Parley’s frown showed his fright. “You sure that

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

man back there—supposedly Harry Owens—you sure he didn't make contact with the U.N.C.L.E. people?"

Raymond sniffed. "You and my partner—a couple of pessimists. Of course I'm sure. Just because he works for U.N.C.L.E. doesn't mean he's a genius. Bad judgment. He held off too long."

"But how can you be so certain?"

"John, I've been in tight spots before; I've had long experience. U.N.C.L.E. isn't crazy. If contact had been made, they'd have stopped us. They'd have had people all around us. They wouldn't give us a gift of six million dollars, would they? Quite simply, my dear man, they wouldn't let us pick up our gold and go away with it. You can bet they wouldn't!"

Langston spoke up. "But they're on to *something!*"

"Oh, I quite agree," boomed Raymond. "From somewhere they learned something, but not too much. They got a little angle on something, and were trying to learn more."

"Angle?" queried Parley, arching one eyebrow. "From where? From whom?"

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"An information leak from one of the idiots in South America."

"Yeah." Tito grinned. "Plenty of wild idiots down there among the crazy Communists."

"Anyway, they were scouting their information to find out if there was anything to it. They put a man on Harry Owens, and they sent a man out here. The guy on Owens either killed or captured him, took his papers and suitcases, changed the picture on the passport, and came to us as Owens. The other guy came to you as a reporter from *Scope*. But your guy didn't get through to his headquarters, did he, John?"

"Definitely not."

"And neither did our guy, for reasons already stated." Raymond sighed. "I'm not saying I'm happy about the situation but I *am* saying we've been lucky, and we've got time to clear out. Now, John. . . ."

"Yessir?"

"With Craig out of action, who's going to handle the lions in the cage while we fill up the false bottoms of the feeding troughs in the wagon?"

"His daughter."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Daughter!"

"A youngster, but she can handle the animals almost as well as her father."

"Where is she?"

Parley smiled. "Resting. Taking a nap. I told her she was going to handle the lions this evening. I told her I had given her father the evening off to go out with his new friend Evan Fairchild." Parley laughed. "He sure is out with his friend Evan Fairchild."

"I repeat, where is she?"

"In a nearby cabin. Brian Powell's."

"Who's Powell?"

"My right hand, my first assistant—and also the public relations man for the circus. As a matter of fact, he's out there now, in charge of the dismantling and packing. But they've started way off on the other side—far away from the lions' wagon."

"Does your Mr. Powell know anything about this?"

"Nothing."

"What reason did you give him for this sudden moving of the circus?"

"Orders from the home office."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Good work, John."

"Thank you."

"And now, if you please. . . ."

"Sir?"

"Get her!"

John Parley gently shook Candy until she came awake.

"Oh? Already?" She sat up and looked at her watch.

"No," Parley said. "Another thing. A nuisance, but necessary."

She stood up, stretched, yawned. "Be happy to do whatever I can."

"A sudden visit from health inspectors. Now they want to see the lions' wagon, their food, their feeding troughs. Somebody's got to take the lions out of the wagon and into the outdoor cage while the inspectors poke around in the wagon. I wish your father were here. I hate to trouble you with this."

"No trouble at all, Mr. Parley."

Parley accompanied Candy to the cage, while Raymond, Langston, and Tito brought the truck

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

up to the rear of the yellow wagon.

Candy entered the cage and snapped the iron door shut. Then she unbolted the swing door and called the lions out. She talked to them, petted them, ordered them to stay down. The lions sprawled out. Recently fed, they were sleepy. They lay quietly, blinking, two of them already asleep.

"The swing door bolted, Candy?"

"Shut tight, Mr. Parley. Your inspectors are perfectly safe."

Parley went around to the rear and motioned to Tito in the driver's seat. Tito jumped out and opened the doors of the truck for Raymond and Langston. Parley unbolted the rear doors of the huge yellow wagon, and then the four of them, working rapidly, transferred the ingots into the wagon.

Within the hot, stuffy, smelly wagon, they packed the ingots into the false bottoms of the feeding troughs, then quickly restored everything to order.

"Finished," said Tito, mopping his face with a handkerchief.

They came out into the relief of the open air.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Okay, John," Raymond said after Parley had securely bolted the doors of the wagon, "have the girl put the lions back." His laughter boomed. "They guard our gold, and who could ask for better guards?"

"Not yet," said Parley.

"Now what?" A frown put a crease between Raymond's eyes.

"I want to talk to Brian Powell."

"What for?"

"To tell him where I'll be."

"Where's that?"

"With you—and also our sleeping company—at Craig's apartment. Also, I want to arrange a special van for us. Leave it to me."

"Okay. But quick."

"It'll be quick." Parley pointed to a motor scooter leaning against the side of the wagon. "In the meantime, Mr. Raymond, I'd like you and Mr. Langston back in the truck and Tito back up there in the driver's seat. And leave the truck doors open."

Raymond squinted, then nodded.

"All right. Now get a move on, mister."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Parley chugged away on the motor scooter, all the way across to the other end of the grounds. There he found Brian Powell.

"How're we doing, Brian?"

"Shipshape, Mr. Parley."

"Good man. I'll be at Kenneth Craig's apartment. When the vans are packed and ready for the airport, call me there."

"Right, Mr. Parley."

"And keep a special van open for me, Craig, and Candy—and their bags and stuff. The reporter, too. He might want to see us off."

"Right, Mr. Parley. You'll have a van all to yourself."

"Thank you, boy."

"Not at all, sir."

"See you later."

"Right."

Parley climbed onto the motor scooter and chugged away.

"Candy!" called Parley through the iron bars of the cage. She was sitting cross-legged among the lions. She smiled at Parley and stood up.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"Are the inspectors done inspecting, Mr. Parley?"

"All finished, dear. You may get the animals back in now."

Candy laughed. "Look at them. All sound asleep, so peaceful and happy out here. It's a pity to have to wake them."

"But we have to, dear."

"Yes, we do."

Candy roused the lions and quietly coaxed them, one by one, through the swing door and into the wagon. While she was busy Parley removed his dart pistol from its holster and held it down along his thigh.

After the last of the lions was in, Candy bolted the swing door, came out of the cage, and latched that door.

"There!" she said. "All done."

"Would you like to meet the inspectors?"

She laughed. "Would they like to meet me?"

"They certainly would—a seventeen-year-old who can handle lions like you can."

"I'd be pleased, Mr. Parley."

"This way."



THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

He led her around to the rear, and beside the truck, without further ceremony, discharged a dart at her and caught her as she fell unconscious.

Raymond helped drag her in.

"I see what you mean, John."

"Impossible to let her wander around alone."

"Yes," agreed Raymond. "How long do they stay unconscious like this?"

"Unless revived, twelve hours."

Raymond lit a cigar. "All right. Now what's the schedule?"

"We go back to Craig's apartment. We wait there till I get a call from Powell. That'll mean the circus is packed up and the vans are ready for the short trip to the airport. We'll have a special van for ourselves. At the airport our big planes are all ready and waiting. A lot of the work here on the grounds is already done. My estimate is that within an hour we'll be en route out of the country."

"Good! You're a good man, John. I'll see to it that you get a fine bonus for this day's work."

"Thank you, Mr. Raymond."

Parley leaped from the truck, shut the doors,

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

and clambered up alongside Tito.

"Here we go." Tito grinned. "But where do we go?"

"Drive. I'll show you."

27. Zeroing In

SIREN WIDE OPEN, wailing a warning, the scanning truck raced along the highway, eating up the miles. The immense steel armored truck had sufficient room to carry in comfort the veritable army of U.N.C.L.E. agents—sixteen men in all. There was the driver who had brought the truck to the Raymond and Langston Building with Professor Philip Bankhead inside. There were the ten men who had accompanied Waverly. And there were Waverly, O'Keefe, Johnson, and Solo, wearing shirt, tie, and jacket. But of the sixteen, only two men were visible: the driver and the lookout sit-

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

ting alongside him in the front seat.

Inside, Waverly was saying: "... first and foremost, Illya Kuryakin. Our first concern is Kuryakin. We must get to him, Phil."

The scientist nodded. "We shall do that, Alexander."

Outside, the driver nudged the lookout man. The lookout man turned his head to the slitted vent behind him.

"We're on the outskirts of Westbury."

"Turn off the siren," Waverly ordered. "Proceed at normal speed."

Solo glanced at his watch. "We made excellent time."

Waverly looked toward Bankhead. "Now, Phil?"

The scientist smiled. "Now, Alexander."

Philip Bankhead was seated away from the others, in front of a radar-equipped scanning board. To his left was a metal amplifying tray. To his right was an instrument panel with its delicately attuned knobs, buttons, wheels, and levers. He touched a button, activating the equipment.

"Now, if you please, Dr. Blaine. Mr. Solo's earpiece. Just drop it in the amplifying tray, please."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

Dr. Blaine did as he was bade. No sooner was the earpiece in the amplifying tray than a faint, hissing sound of breathing was heard by all of them. Solo's earpiece was receiving the sounds of Illya's breathing.

"Marvelous," whispered Dr. Blaine.

Philip Bankhead put a headset over his ears. Clearly, distinctly, he heard the breathing. He turned his head, nodded, smiled at Waverly, and returned to his work. He touched a button on the instrument panel and a directional antenna rose up from the roof of the scanning truck. Watching the scanning board, listening intently through the headset, turning knobs that rotated the outside antenna, Philip Bankhead plotted his course. Suddenly he spoke.

"Tell him he's going too fast. Tell him to slow his speed—considerably."

Waverly repeated the order through the vent. They could all feel the sudden reduction of speed.

Bankhead smiled. "Yes. That's it. I don't want him going any faster."

Waverly relayed the advice through the vent.

Bankhead was smiling up at the scanning board,

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

transfixed, as though in worship. Despite the beads of perspiration on his forehead, his face bore a beatific expression. "I've got a perfect line on him. We're still a distance away, but we can't miss. Right turn now . . . good, yes . . . straight ahead . . . easy, easy now . . . left . . . that's it . . . another left now . . . good . . . straight away . . . no . . . hold it . . . right turn now . . . yes, good . . . another right . . . good boy . . . straight ahead . . . easy, easy does it. . . ."

And so, slowly but surely, they came nearer and nearer to Illya Kuryakin.

28. *Parley Makes His Point*

BETWEEN THE TWO of them, Parley and Raymond, holding Candy upright but dragging her as though she were ill, had gotten her into the apartment without misadventure. Tito had parked the truck around the corner, and then he and Langston had been admitted to the apartment, Parley locking the door behind them. Tito had carried Candy to a bed, and Raymond had seen the bound Kur-yakin and Craig.

"Are we going to tie her up, too?" Raymond asked.

"What for?" replied Parley.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Don't ask me," said Raymond. "You're the guy that tied *them*."

"Force of habit." Parley's smile was ghastly. "No reason for tying them. No reason for tying her. They'll sleep."

"But not for long," said Raymond.

Parley winced. "Would you explain that, Mr. Raymond?"

"In the living room. We have time to talk, I take it."

"There's time," said Parley.

In the living room, awaiting Brian Powell's call, they made themselves comfortable.

"We get rid of them," Raymond said.

"How?" asked Langston.

Raymond calmly puffed his cigar. "They're sleeping. It'll be a simple matter for Tito to throttle them. You know my motto, Otis—dead men tell no tales."

"But not the girl," expostulated Tito. "Why the young girl? She knows nothing."

"But we won't be able to explain the absence of her father. We don't need a hysterical kid on our hands." Raymond exhaled aromatic cigar smoke,

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

negligently flicking the ash. "I say kill them—get them out of the way—the three of them."

"I say kill none of them," interjected Parley.

"You say! Who are you?" Raymond's gaze was contemptuous. "You're *nothing*, that's who you are!"

"May I express an opinion?"

"You may express nothing."

"Let him talk," said Langston.

"Why? He's a lackey. A servant. He does what he's told and nothing else. He has no right to talk back to his superiors."

"Just an opinion," wheezed Parley.

"Let the man talk," said Langston.

"But he's merely a—"

"Let him talk, Felix."

"Okay, Mr. Parley, Mr. John Parley talking back to his superiors—talk!" Raymond blurted.

Parley's nostrils were compressed to white ridges. His lips trembled. "An opinion. I just wish to express an opinion," he quavered.

"This is talking?" sneered Raymond. "Talk, brave Mr. Parley—but remember, I won't forget this insolence."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"What I'm trying to say," said Parley, "is why not leave this decision—life or death—to the higher echelon, the T.H.R.U.S.H. executives?"

"In the field, I make the decisions," boomed Raymond.

Parley pressed on. "The high echelon in T.H.R.U.S.H. might want to talk to these people, might want to examine them. We had no idea that Craig was a man from U.N.C.L.E. The T.H.R.U.S.H. executives might want to question him on that. They could learn a lot from him. And they can learn a lot from the other agent—the one posing as Evan Fairchild—once we deliver him—*alive!*"

"He's got a point," piped Langston.

"Your decision, Mr. Raymond, might not meet with the approval of the men above you—and there *are* men above you." Watching Raymond, Parley was beginning to regain composure. "But once we execute your decision, then these people are dead and we cannot reverse the decision."

Parley hesitated.

Blandly Felix Raymond smoked his cigar. "Please continue, John."

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"They're in coma. They won't be any trouble to us. We'll have a special van here. I'm sure I can get them onto one of our planes—just as I know I can get you three onto the plane. I say we bring them over to Europe with us, to a T.H.R.U.S.H. sanctuary, and let the big shots there make the life-or-death decision. They might very well appreciate that we brought them two U.N.C.L.E. agents—*alive*. And without any real trouble on our part. It would be different if we had no alternative—if we *had* to get rid of them."

"The man has a point," said Langston.

Raymond sat back, eyes half-closed, smoking his cigar. "Maybe you *do* have a point, John," he purred. "Perhaps I've been a bit stubborn; I have a hard head, you know." He laughed briefly. "And a quick temper." Raymond sat forward. "John, if I've insulted you—and I have—I humbly apologize. Quick temper, quick tongue."

"His bark is worse than his bite," Langston said lamely.

"John," said Raymond, smiling, "you've presented some excellent arguments, and I propose, right here and now while we still have time, that

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

we put those arguments on the table and discuss them—a full, forthright discussion. All of us—pro and con. That includes you, too, Tito. I want you to feel free to. . . .”

29. Circus Catch

THE SCANNING TRUCK came to a stop.

Waverly, Bankhead, and Solo alighted.

Bankhead pointed. "He's in that house."

"I'm going in for a look," said Solo.

"Careful," said Waverly.

"Sure," said Solo.

"And I mean *careful*." The Old Man smiled wearily. "We almost lost you once today."

Solo winked, then strolled into the lobby of the apartment house. There he looked at the nameplates. CRAIG was printed in blue ink on a white slip-in cardboard. The apartment was 1-A.

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

Solo tried the lobby door. It was not locked. Silently he entered into a hallway. Apartment 1-A was on the ground floor, in the rear. He paused at the door of 1-A and listened. He heard the sound of voices, but did not tarry long enough to distinguish them. One of them sounded like Raymond's boom, but Solo was not certain.

He returned to the street to report to Waverly.

"Craig has an apartment in there. One-A. Ground floor, rear. The lobby door's not locked. I sneaked in for a listen at One-A. Voices. One of them sounded like Felix Raymond's, but I didn't stay long enough to make sure."

Bankhead said, "Illya Kuryakin is in that apartment house."

"Then he figures to be in One-A," said Solo.

The Old Man nodded. They went back to the truck.

Waverly gave instructions. "We're going to have to go in en masse—all of us, in a great group. We're going to have to rush them. Whoever is in there—and Solo suspects Felix Raymond is one of them—they're probably armed. We've got to go in so fast that they won't have a chance to go for their

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

guns. Where's Colin Walker?"

"Here," said Walker.

"The lobby door's open, but the apartment door figures to be locked. Can you open it without making noise?"

Walker grinned broadly. "A simple lock? An apartment door? You've got to be kidding."

The Old Man lost himself. For a moment, in a fatherly gesture, he hugged the young man. Then, embarrassed, he released him.

"Good luck," he said dryly.

"We'll need it," breathed Solo.

Fifteen men followed Colin Walker into the building. Fascinated, they watched as he inserted the slender, steel picklock.

Inside, the life-and-death debate still raged. Raymond was for the immediate disposal of the three in the bedroom. Parley and Tito were for keeping them alive. Langston was not convinced either way—he wavered between the opposing factions—and it was toward him that the arguments were directed. Raymond said, "Make up your mind, Otis. I don't want to carry the brunt of this all alone. If you vote with me, we do it. If you

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

vote with them, we don't do it. It's up to you. Your decision."

But the decision was never made. The door burst open and they were overwhelmed by U.N.C.L.E. agents.

Dr. Blaine went to work on the three in the bedroom.

Illya came out first, then Kenneth Craig, followed by Candy, yawning deliciously. She stared in amazement at Parley, Raymond, Langston, and Tito—all handcuffed.

Solo rushed at Illya and they embraced.

"Brother, you sure had me worried," said Solo.

"*I had you* worried!" Illya cried. "You seem to have things reversed, Napoleon."

"Napoleon!" exclaimed Kenneth Craig, staring at Solo. "Is your name Napoleon?"

"My first name."

Illya introduced them.

"Napoleon Solo, meet Kenneth Craig."

"Napoleon!" Craig laughed, pointed at Illya. "I thought this guy had lost his marbles; I really did. I thought he'd gone mad. There he was, talking into thin air—to Napoleon Bonaparte!"

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

"I wasn't talking into thin air," said Illya. He took the palate-plate out of his mouth. "I was talking into this."

"What is it?" asked the astonished Craig.

Waverly took him aside and quickly brought him up to date on current events. "I doubted you, Kenneth. I admit it. But in all the circumstances, can you blame me?"

"Not at all, sir. I understand. Of course I do. I'd have reacted in exactly the same manner."

"Good of you to say that, Kenneth."

"I mean it with all my heart, Mr. Waverly."

"Thank you. And now back to business. You're going to have to get those ingots out of there."

"No problem, sir. I'll need a couple of your men and—a conveyance."

"We've got a truck outside."

"Perfect."

Just then the phone rang. Craig answered it. He listened, frowning. Then he said, "Hold everything, Brian," and he hung up.

And once again he and Waverly were in private conference.

"The circus is shipping out tonight."

THE GUNRUNNERS' GOLD

"Well, it'll have to ship without John Parley," said Waverly.

"Good enough. Brian Powell and I can handle it."

"What you can say about Parley—a form of truth without telling too much about it—is simply that he was arrested in the United States. Now, what about the gold ingots, Kenneth?"

"Without an outside cage for the lions, it's going to be more difficult. But leave it to us."

"Us?"

"Candy and I."

"Candy?"

"My daughter."

"Fine." Waverly turned and pointed. "You, you, you, you," he said, pointing separately and individually. "You will go with Mr. Craig. And take the truck."

"Come on, Candy," Craig called.

"Where, Dad?"

"We've got a job on our hands."

Candy smiled brightly. "Whatever you say."

She joined her father and they went out in the company of four men from U.N.C.L.E.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

And so the Parley Circus departed that night, minus John Parley, and minus Felix Raymond and Otis Langston and Tito Zagoro, and minus six million dollars in gold bullion.

Whitman CLASSICS



Pinocchio

Stand By for Adventure

Alice in Wonderland

Black Beauty

Tales to Tremble By

Heidi

Little Women

Tales From Arabian Nights

Huckleberry Finn

The Call of the Wild

Tom Sawyer

Robin Hood

**The Wonderful Wizard
of Oz**

Robinson Crusoe

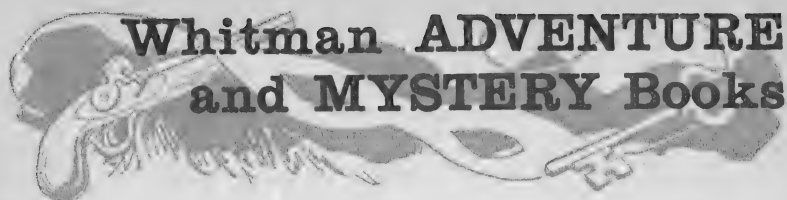
**Wild Animals I Have
Known**

The War of the Worlds

Here are some of the best-loved stories of all time. Delightful . . . intriguing . . . never-to-be-forgotten tales that you will read again and again. Start your own home library of WHITMAN CLASSICS so that you'll always have exciting books at your fingertips.



REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.



Whitman ADVENTURE and MYSTERY Books

Adventure Stories for GIRLS and BOYS...

BRAINS BENTON SERIES

The Missing Message
The Counterfeit Coin
The Stolen Dummy

DONNA PARKER

In Hollywood
Special Agent
On Her Own
A Spring to Remember
Takes a Giant Step

POWER BOYS SERIES

The Haunted Skyscraper
The Flying Skeleton
The Burning Ocean
The Million-Dollar Penny
The Double Kidnapping
The Vanishing Lady

REAL LIFE STORIES

To Dance, To Dream
Heroes in Blue and Gray

New Stories About Your Television Favorites...

Bonanza

The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
The Gentle Saboteur
The Gunrunners' Gold

F Troop

The Gnome-Mobile

Lassie

Secret of the Summer
Blackberry Bog
Bristlecone Pine

I Spy

The Munsters
The Last Resort

Gilligan's Island

The Big Valley

The Green Hornet

Tarzan

Walt Disney's Annette

